



Oman Inclusion Conference 2025: Report & Policy Recommendations From Conference Think Tank Discussions



Executive Summary: Key Recommendations to Building an Inclusive Education System in The Sultanate of Oman

Background

The Oman Inclusion Conference 2025, convened educators, parents, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to explore pathways to advancing inclusive education in Oman. With over 50 organizations represented, the conference served as a critical platform for professional development, networking, and systems-level dialogue. This report presents the key findings and policy recommendations that emerged from collaborative Think Tank Sessions. The insights shared by various practitioners and stakeholders from Oman provide a valuable roadmap for advancing inclusive education in the Sultanate, complimenting the education strategic direction of Oman Vision 2040 (p. 7).

Key Recommendations

Through these sessions, the following areas were identified for policy action to strengthen inclusive education in Oman:

- **Empowering Teachers:** Prioritize comprehensive teacher training in inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, equitable classroom practices, multi-agency collaboration and the effective use of assistive technology. Provide educators with adequate time, resources, and ongoing support. Develop whole-school understandings and strengthen utilization of student support services.
- **Safe & Welcoming Schools:** Promote whole-school approaches to inclusion, diversity, and well-being. Prioritize social-emotional learning, create safe spaces, prioritize mental health support for students and staff, and enable meaningful student voice.
- **Parental & Community Involvement:** Build collaborative partnerships between schools, families, communities, and government agencies. Improve access to information, streamline diagnostic processes, and build parent support networks. Empower parents and communities as active participants in their children's education, and train educators in culturally sensitive communication and emotional awareness.
- **Post-School Transitions:** Inflexible curricula hinder transitions to higher education and therefore employment. Expand vocational training opportunities, improve access to diagnosis and assessment services, and implement flexible curriculum pathways to support successful post-school transitions for children with special educational needs.
- **Assistive Technology:** Increase awareness about non-digital or low-tech assistive technology tools. Increase funding for assistive technology, prioritize teacher training on its effective use, and develop a comprehensive national implementation plan to ensure equitable access.



Conclusion

The Oman Inclusion Conference 2025 underscored a shared commitment to transforming inclusive education in Oman. Participants emphasized the need for a coordinated, well-resourced approach grounded in practical tools, multisectoral collaboration, and culturally informed practices. This echoes Oman Vision 2040's aim to

‘...foster inclusive education, sustainable learning, and groundbreaking research, thereby cultivating a knowledge-driven society and a nation endowed with competitive capabilities. By comprehensively enhancing the educational system at all levels and elevating the standards of both school and higher education, this initiative seeks to optimize outcomes.’

(Oman 2040 Vision Report, 2024, p. 10).

This report serves as a starting point for policymakers and practitioners seeking to build a truly inclusive education system, aligned with the country's vision and global inclusive education frameworks. Each section delves into a specific key question, exploring challenges, highlighting best practices, and offering actionable policy recommendations tailored to the context of The Sultanate of Oman. While we acknowledge that further discussions and explorations of the topics can occur and are very much needed, this report has intentionally specifically focused on a scope limited to the direct discussions and outcomes from the Think Tank Groups.

Acknowledgements

Al- Jisr Foundation and Inspire Educational Consultancy would like to extend their deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the first Oman Inclusion Conference. This groundbreaking event would not have been possible without the unwavering support, dedication, and collaboration of many passionate individuals and organizations.

To our gracious hosts, **The Sultan's School**, thank you for welcoming us into your space and for creating an environment where dialogue, learning, and connection could flourish.

We are especially grateful to **Daniel Sobel and Sarah Johnson** from the **International Forum for Inclusion Practitioners**, whose insightful presentations and skilled facilitation brought depth, clarity, and inspiration to both days of the conference.

To the incredible team at **Inspire Educational Consultancy**—your unwavering vision and tireless dedication to making this conference a reality are what brought it to life. Your commitment to inclusion and excellence shines through every detail, including the collaborative creation of this report.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the **Ministry of Education** and **UNESCO** for their invaluable support and endorsement of this initiative. Their encouragement and involvement provided an essential foundation for the success of this event and highlighted the national and global importance of inclusive education.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Board of Directors at **Al Jisr Foundation**, and the highly committed team there, for their continued support for strategic initiatives within the country which greatly benefit our communities. Your clear commitment to inclusive education continues to inspire and drive meaningful change.

Finally, to the **educators, professionals and parents** who joined us, engaged with us, and shared their voices—this conference was for you and because of you. Your presence and participation are the true measure of its success. Together, we are building a more inclusive future for all learners in Oman.

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Nadia Sultan
Founder & Educational Psychologist
Inspire Educational Consultancy

About the Oman Inclusion Conference 2025

The Oman Inclusion Conference, held in February 2025, brought together educators, policymakers, parents, healthcare professionals and inclusion advocates to explore critical challenges and opportunities in creating a truly inclusive education system in Oman.

This event was made possible with the vision of Inspire Educational Consultancy, and generous support and drive of Al-Jisr Foundation. Hosted by The Sultan's School, and facilitated by the Keynote Speaker Daniel Sobel of the International Forum of Inclusion Practitioners (IFIP), the event sought to:

1. Equip educators, school leaders and practitioners with actionable strategies for creating inclusive classrooms.
2. Provide a local event for knowledge exchange, professional development and networking among stakeholders dedicated to inclusive education.
3. Introduce and prompt the Global Inclusive Teaching Initiative (GITI) and its Arabic equivalent Idmij, as well as IFIP's resources for effective inclusive education.

The Oman Inclusion Conference 2025 was a two-day event targeting all individuals (both professionals and parents) in a position to support inclusion. The idea of the event was developed to provide an opportunity for professionals and parents to meet with the common goal of building inclusive practice within the Sultanate of Oman. Specifically, it was hoped that by offering this event, that participants would be able to:

- build upon their knowledge and understanding of best-practice in relation to inclusion,
- understand the key component of collaboration in working towards better inclusive practice,
- develop their network of support and guidance through exposure to other participants, and
- leave feeling empowered, hopeful and better equipped to develop their inclusive practice journey.

Day One focused on extending participant's understanding of inclusion, and related systems, strategies and techniques to better inclusive practice. Specifically, Day One sought to cater to individuals such as parents, general classroom teachers, subject specific teachers, teaching assistants, learning support staff & leaders, pastoral care staff & leaders, senior leadership teams, heads of schools & early years settings and other agencies such as healthcare professionals. A running order or agenda for Day One can be found in Appendix 1.

Day Two focused on sharing a parent's perspective of their child's journey through education, as well as discussing and answering Five Key Questions raised at the Global Inclusive Schools Forum (Paris, 2024) linked to inclusion through Think Tank Sessions. Specifically, Day Two catered to all those professionals in a position to influence policy and systematic practice within their schools or organisations such as officials from both the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, heads of schools & early years settings, senior leadership teams and heads/leaders/coordinators of any student support services in schools. A running order or agenda for Day Two can be found in Appendix 1.

Given the vast array of individuals needed to support inclusive practice, there was a large variety of professionals and organisations represented at the conference, and English-to-Arabic simultaneous translation services were on hand for Arabic speakers to access. A total of 54 organizations were

represented including schools, nurseries, The Ministry of Education, higher education institutes, clinics, consultancies and others.

Incredibly, 45 teachers (general classroom teachers as well as inclusion teachers, leaders and supervisors) attended. 28 healthcare professionals were also present, as well as 23 members of senior leadership teams from various organisations. To access a full breakdown of all attendee figures, please see Appendix 2.

Four organisations worked together to build and deliver The Oman Inclusion Conference 2025:



The International Forum of Inclusion Practitioners

is a voluntary members organisation consisting of hundreds of inclusion practitioners from across the world. Its global network currently spans over 135 countries dedicated to championing inclusive education worldwide. Through impactful programs like the Global Inclusive Teaching Initiative (GITI) and the Inclusion Think Tank, IFIP empowers practitioners with practical tools and strategies, while also influencing policy changes at national and international levels.



Al Jisr Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Muscat, Oman and established on November 14th, 2010.. The foundation focuses on sustainable projects in the health, education, economy and social welfare sectors. The foundation is independently funded and does not accept donations from any source. Al Jisr Foundation provides opportunities for people to achieve a better life through its core programs, which align with Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the Sultanate of Oman.

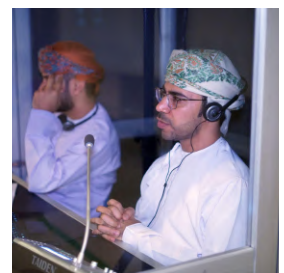


Inspire Educational Consultancy

was established in Oman in 2013 to offer schools, parents and professionals the very best of Educational Psychology with the objective of making a difference to children, young people, their teachers and families. Inspire aims to promote the development, participation, learning and achievement of all children and young people. Through the process of engaging teachers, children, their families and other professionals, IEC helps schools to make a real difference to the learning and development of the child.



The Sultan's School was established in 1977, offering outstanding facilities and highly professional teaching staff to cater to its students. The Sultan's School provides a high quality education and is one of the leading bilingual schools in the region. The school seeks to help young men and women acquire those ethical and intellectual qualities that are necessary for leadership in the rapidly changing world of Oman. The educational programme endeavours to produce versatile leaders and self-directed individuals with an international perspective.



Key Speakers



Daniel Sobel - Keynote Speaker
Founder, International Forum of
Inclusion Practitioners (IFIP)



Janaab Sayyida Dr. Shariffa
Khalid Qais Al-Said
Educational Consultant, Oman's
Ministry of Education



Sarah Johnson
Educational Consultant, Founder
of Phoenix Education Consultancy
& IFIP Member



Raja'a Sultan
Child and Adolescent Therapist &
Co-Founder of Eunoia Clinic



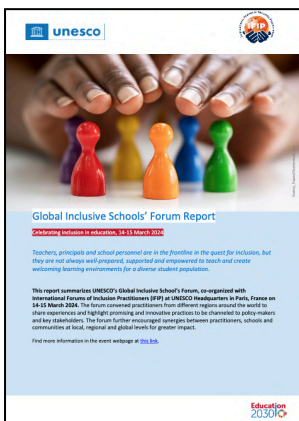
Sumaira A. Chowdhury
UNICEF Representative to the
Sultanate of Oman



Laila Al-Maawali
Parent of an individual with
Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Sensory
Processing Disorder

Background to the Event & Report

The Oman Inclusion Conference 2025 served as a pivotal conference seeking to positively contribute to inclusive education within the country. Esteemed dignitaries, influential education leaders, seasoned practitioners and parents met to understand fundamentals linked to inclusive practice, as well as discussed related challenges currently being experienced. Through open dialogue, and a series of Think Tank Sessions, a powerful sense of unity and shared purpose emerged. The conference successfully amplified the voices of key stakeholders, offering invaluable insights to policymakers committed to fostering inclusive learning environments within The Sultanate of Oman.



A Think Tank Session is a gathering of experts to discuss challenges, ideas and insights in a specific field. Five Think Tank Sessions took place on the second day of the conference, with each seeking to answer a key question linked to a relevant area of inclusion through anecdotal evidence from participants. The origins of the questions link back to the Global Inclusive Schools Forum at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in March 2024; this event was a result of a partnership between The International Forum of Inclusion Practitioners and UNESCO.

A significant amount of thought and preparation went into the Think Tank Sessions, due to the fundamental role we felt they played in helping us obtain a more accurate image of inclusive practice in Oman. Each Think Tank

Session was facilitated by two professionals strategically selected due to their relevant experience and/or knowledge of that field; please see Appendix 3 for a brief description of each professional. The same was done with participants in each Think Tank Session, to ensure that responses from each group were maximised and best-informed. Finally, guiding questions to support the key question were developed and suggested to assist discussions; the list of guiding questions are available in Appendix 4.

Throughout this report, we have adopted the term ‘special education students’ translated from Oman’s Ministry of Education’s ‘Guidelines for the Assessment Accommodations of Special Education Students for Grades 1-12.’ (2022). According to this document, special education students encompass persons with Visual Impairments, Hearing Impairments, Autism Spectrum Conditions, Specific Learning Difficulties, Physical & Medical Conditions, Mental Health Conditions, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Speech and Language Difficulties or Disorders, and co-occurring conditions. (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 3). In the interest of ensuring a cohesive understanding of this report, a Glossary of Key Terms can be found at the end.



The Five Key Questions

The IFIP UNESCO Global Inclusive Schools Forum (Paris, March 2024) ignited a global conversation about the most critical challenges and opportunities within inclusive education. Emerging from that impactful event were five key questions. Each Think Tank Group focused on a key question in relation to inclusive education and practice:



1. The Teacher's Role

How can we best equip educators to effectively engage diverse learners?
Facilitated by Daniel Sobel & Sarah Al-Maawali



2. Safe & Welcoming Schools

How can we create inclusive learning environments that prioritize the well-being of all?
Facilitated by Nigel Fossey & Sarah Johnson



3. Parental & Community Involvement

How can we strengthen the role of parents and communities in supporting inclusive education?
Facilitated by Nadia Sultan & Ohood Al-Hasni



4. Post-School Transitions

How can we equip special education students for successful transitions to further education and employment?
Facilitated by Jinane Helou & Lamya Al-Kiyumi



5. Assistive Technology

How can we leverage assistive technology to create more accessible and inclusive learning environments?
Facilitated by Rafif Al-Jafari & Kirk McCullough

The Teacher's Role; How can we best equip educators to effectively engage diverse learners?

Teachers are at the heart of inclusive education. Their skills, knowledge and attitudes directly impact the learning and wellbeing of every student (Boyle et al., 2020). Yet, a key problem all over the world is that most tend to have limited knowledge and training in inclusion and persistence of outdated paradigms (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019; UNESCO, 2020a). The Teacher's Role Think Tank Group focused on exploring key areas at both teacher and systemic levels that could enable teachers to effectively engage a diverse pool of learners. Whilst the key points from this can be viewed in the tables below, additional points were discussed.

Firstly, it was agreed that **inclusive pedagogy and strategies can benefit all students**, not just students with special education needs, as inclusive teaching methods improve overall classroom engagement, student motivation, and academic achievement (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). However, it was highlighted that **teachers often did not feel adequately equipped or supported** to develop their practice in a way that is beneficial to all learners. Mirroring this information, Emam (2016) highlighted that teachers in Oman faced significant challenges, including weak competencies, lack of funds and inadequate resources in inclusive education, which hinder their ability to support diverse learners effectively. It is well documented that professional development in inclusive pedagogy leads to improved teacher knowledge and teaching efficacy in inclusive practice (Donath et al., 2023; Florian, L., & Pantic, N., 2017; Forlin et al., 2013).



In addition to this, **teachers expressed a lack of shared responsibility and cohesion** between key educational and healthcare professionals involved in a child's learning, hindering their ability to cater to their students effectively. Specifically, participants reported poor alignment of the expectations and/or beliefs of senior leadership teams in relation to their own, which is echoed in research citing a lack of administrative support as a significant barrier to inclusion (Fuchs, 2009). Similarly, participants indicated a lack of multisectoral collaboration in supporting a given child, and that heavy reliance on clinical based interventions did not lend to their ability to include a child effectively, echoing the importance of adopting multi-agency working to inform and support inclusion (Djafri, 2025; Patana, 2020).

The above contributed to a further key discussion, centering around teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of student support services (learning support, counselor services, speech and language therapy...etc). **Inclusion Leaders communicated that they are often perceived as a separate entity of the school system**, rather than an extension of classroom support. This, unfortunately, **places such professionals in a reactive and remedial role**. In complete contradiction to recommendations made by entities such as the Education Endowment Foundation (2021), participants of this group reported an over reliance on and misuse of pull out and/or one-one interventions, coupled with an underwhelming reliance on high quality teaching within the classroom setting. This, they reported, often negatively impacted their student's sense of belonging, access to classroom curricula and connection with both their teachers and peers. It can be argued that this is also an indication of **underdeveloped whole-school understanding of student support services**, and how they can be best utilised. This, coupled with an **overall lack of robust support throughout schools**, continues to contribute to teacher's feeling of overwhelm as well as their perception that supporting special education students is a continued challenge (Pearson, 2024).

Understanding the Barriers

Despite a growing commitment to inclusion, several obstacles prevent widespread adoption of inclusive practices in schools in Oman:

- A. Time Constraints:** Teachers consistently cite limited time as a major barrier to implementing inclusive practices, suggesting they are often perceived as more time-consuming than traditional teaching methods.
- B. Magnified Challenges:** The specific needs and challenges of special education students can become more pronounced in mainstream settings, requiring specialized support and individualized attention.
- C. Fragmented Approaches:** A lack of whole-school approaches to inclusion, diversity and well-being creates inconsistencies and limits the effectiveness of individual efforts.
- D. Over-Reliance on Learning Support Staff:** Positioning Learning Support Staff as the sole solution for special education students diminishes the role of classroom teachers and can lead to a sense of disengagement and reduced responsibility.

Actions for Impactful Change & Policy Recommendations

To effectively equip teachers to support special education students, educational institutions within Oman should prioritise the following:

- 1. Address Time Constraints:** Provide dedicated time for teachers to plan, implement, and reflect on inclusive practices. This could include protected planning time, reduced workloads, or designated release days for professional development.
- 2. Provide Targeted Support and Resources:** Equip teachers with practical tools and resources (e.g. visual timetables, sensory circuit checklists) to support their work with special education students. Offer readily accessible 'toolkits' that empower teachers to address specific student needs proactively and independently.
- 3. Foster Whole-School Approaches:** Move beyond isolated initiatives to implement comprehensive, school-wide policies and practices related to inclusion, diversity, and well-being. This includes establishing clear expectations, providing consistent messaging, ensuring that all staff members are trained and supported in implementing inclusive pedagogy and that recruitment processes involve seeking particular mindsets/attitudes through interview processes that reflect the school's vision and ethos.
- 4. Promote Collaborative Partnerships:** Encourage collaborative partnerships between classroom teachers, Learning Support Staff, and other specialists. Foster a shared understanding of student needs and co-develop individualised support plans that leverage the expertise of all team members.
- 5. Develop Clear Inclusion Education Policies:** Implement clear policies that promote uniform language and shared understanding of inclusive practices across schools. This creates a cohesive framework for action and supports consistent implementation.

Safe & Welcoming Schools; How can we best equip educators to effectively engage diverse learners?

Inclusive education is not merely a policy objective, but a moral imperative. Creating learning environments where every student and staff member feels a sense of belonging, value and support is crucial for individual growth and collective well-being (Kachchhap & Horo, 2021; National Children's Bureau, 2024).

The Safe & Welcoming Schools Think Tank Group focused on identifying key principles for building safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environments. Adopting **flexible and inclusive practices** such as adaptable teaching methods and assessment strategies (Mitchell, 2015), and removing rigid systems that penalize vulnerability and exclude students would better cater to the needs of all learners (Lubke, Piquart & Schwinger, 2021). **Consistency and connection** were viewed as pertinent to establishing strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students, as children thrive in environments where they feel known, understood and connected to their educators and peers (Jowett et al., 2023; Zins et al., 2004).



It was highlighted that adopting a **child-centred approach**, by prioritizing the holistic needs of each child and recognising that their academic success is intertwined with their emotional and physical well-being is imperative to their success. Research supports this approach, emphasizing that holistic education fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development, ultimately enhancing student outcomes (Geneva Global, 2022; Mahmoudi et al, 2012). Several studies have shown that when social and emotional

learning (SEL) programs are integrated with the standard curriculum, students exhibit markedly better academic performance than those who do not receive such support (Durlak et al., 2011; January et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). In addition to this, **prioritizing well-being** as an integral part of the school culture, dedicating time to listen to and understand each child's individual experience directly creates safe spaces for emotional expression and access to mental health support (Jayatissa, 2024).

Finally, **supporting staff well-being** was a crucial component of this discussion, as contributors highlighted that emotionally healthy educators are better equipped to support their students. Research shows that teachers with strong social-emotional competence, when supported by systemic well-being initiatives, create classroom environments that boost student engagement and achievement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Oberle et al., 2016).

Understanding the Barriers

Whilst there is a developing understanding of the need to consider the emotional and mental wellbeing of both students and staff, the following barriers were identified:

- A. Limited or Uneven Access to Training:** Many schools lack consistent access to high-quality mental health well-being training. In addition, teachers felt that they often receive limited training on topics such as managing trauma, anxiety, how to develop a learner's psychosocial competencies, and SEND/Neurodiversity specific needs.
- B. Limited External Support Services:** A growing number of schools are now relying on external services such as social workers, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists...etc. However, they expressed that these are not always available.
- C. Lack of 'Practical Tools':** Teachers expressed a need for more practical, classroom-based strategies to support students' emotional wellbeing.
- D. Little Focus on Staff Well-being:** Many educators expressed that the well-being of staff is not prioritized, and that they did not feel emotionally ready/healthy enough to support students in the best possible way that they can.

Actions for Impactful Change & Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations, based on the insights of professionals in Oman, offer a pathway for creating more inclusive learning environments:

- 1. Comprehensive Teacher Training:** Provide initial and ongoing professional development for teachers that elaborate on how they can proactively promote and support the mental health and emotional well-being of students. Focus on creating awareness amongst staff around areas such as safeguarding or psychosocial development, as well as on ways in which staff can equip students with strong psychosocial skills.
- 2. Resources Allocation:** Plan for and allocate adequate funding for specialized support services, and professional development opportunities for educators on an annual basis. Build relationships, and potentially even contractual agreements, with professionals in a position to support your students and staff.
- 3. Curriculum Development:** Develop and implement curricula that incorporate social-emotional learning at all grade levels. Draw on the knowledge and training of school counselors to inform such curricula and training relevant to implementing it. Immerse school counselors in the classroom to co-teach or co-deliver such curricula.
- 4. Mental Health & Well-being Support:** Provide access to mental health resources and counseling services for both students and staff. Provide training for students on resilience or coping skills. Create an atmosphere and supporting systems whereby staff can confidently share if they are overwhelmed or struggling, as emotionally healthy educators are better equipped to support students.

Parental & Community Involvement; How can we strengthen the role of parents and communities in supporting inclusive education?

Inclusive education thrives when parents and communities are actively engaged as partners in the educational journey. Their insights, expertise, and support are essential for creating learning environments where all students can reach their full potential (Afolabi, 2014; Eden et al., 2024).

The Parental & Community Involvement Think Tank Group focused on identifying key ways in which parents and the wider community can be actively involved in supporting inclusive education.

Specifically, **how parents can and should be involved in their child's learning**, and can be better equipped with adequate support and resources to help

them **navigate diagnostic and intervention services**. In addition, how **different professionals bring unique expertise to each individual child and their family** (Atkinson et al., 2022), and the **importance and need for multidisciplinary teams in inclusive education** (Solvason & Winwood, 2022).



Some existing support systems and resources within Oman were identified, such as:

- Rehabilitation & Early Intervention Services; such as those provided by specialized rehabilitation centers, and early intervention home-learning programs such as the Portage Program.
- Oman's Ministry of Social Development and its support to families through financial assistance for families of children with diagnosed disabilities. Additionally, the MoSD has a dedicated hotline providing guidance and support for families (1555).
- Online Resources & Support Groups; free online resources and social media platforms provide valuable information and peer support.
- Mental Health Support; some mental health clinics provide limited support programmes to parents of neurodivergent children, and the majority of them offer counseling services that parents can access on a one-to-one basis.

The process of recognizing and addressing a child's diverse needs can be emotionally challenging and stressful for parents (Scheibner et al, 2023). For various reasons, such as social stigma, lack of community understanding, or socioeconomic status, many parents often feel quite isolated in their attempts to acquire the correct information about and support of their child (Cheng, 2023; Dembo et al, 2022). Furthermore, a significant amount of discussion centred around the various stages of grief that parents can experience in relation to their child (Fernandez-Avaloz, 2020), how this can present, and the accompanying challenges. As a result, there was an overwhelming agreement that far more can be done to support parents, in order to aid them in supporting their children (Mayate, 2019).

Through supporting the family around the child, we can develop a **stronger sense of community and shared responsibility between all parties involved in a child's learning and care.**

Specifically, it was highlighted that more could be done at a school and healthcare level to create awareness about the logistical, financial and emotional impact of such experiences for families (Singh & Verma, 2017). Additionally, it was argued that families would benefit from social networks involving other parents and professionals (Dembo et al, 2022; Varda & Talmi, 2018). By establishing these, and encouraging parents to access them, all would benefit from the point of information sharing, and provide both emotional and logistical support to parents on this journey. The recommendations listed below seek to create a stronger, more inclusive education system that empowers families and communities as valued partners in the learning journey of all children.

Understanding the Barriers

Parents in Oman face numerous obstacles when seeking support, services and resources in relation to their child:

- A. Navigating the System:** Parents face difficulty in locating the right services for their child, which is compounded by a shortage of specialised professionals. This also impacts their ability to access appropriate diagnostic assessments for their child. As a result of limited open and accessible information, there is a lack of trust in the system.
- B. Long Waiting Lists & Limited Resources:** Inadequate resources (both human and otherwise) and lack of multidisciplinary teams result in long waiting lists and disjointed intervention services, creating delays and frustration for families seeking support. This is further compounded by the time and pressure parents experience to access assessments and adequate support.
- C. Lack of Parental Support:** There is limited access to mental health support and guidance for parents navigating these challenges, therefore exacerbating their emotional burden and stress. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of the emotional journey of parents amongst educators/schools, their process of grief and how it can present, and how to carefully support them in navigating this journey.
- D. Financial Burdens:** The cost of assessments and intervention services (often long term) are inaccessible to the majority of the population.
- E. Cultural Norms:** Societal pressures, lack of awareness and misinformation among the general public (e.g. about Autism and other neurodevelopmental differences and the notion of 'curing' individuals or them 'growing out of it') can create additional barriers to seeking and receiving effective support for children, families and schools.

Actions for Impactful Change & Policy Recommendations

To effectively strengthen parent and community involvement in inclusive education, policymakers in Oman should consider the following:

- 1. Enhance Access to Information:** Improve access to information through schools and healthcare settings by running awareness campaigns such as individuals parents can turn to if they are experiencing concerns about their child. Develop and disseminate accessible, multilingual resources for parents on available support services, inclusion education and disability rights.
- 2. Streamline Assessment & Diagnosis Processes:** Improve early access to services for families in order to promote early identification and intervention and provide early support. Reduce the need

for families to visit multiple professionals to seek guidance and support by increasing multi-disciplinary teams within healthcare services. Increase the availability of specialized professionals to reduce waiting times.

- 3. Expand Parent Support Networks & Understanding:** Create supportive networks within school or healthcare communities where parents can share experiences, resources and access emotional support. Conduct workshops to educate parents about inclusive education, rights and available support services. Partner with local organizations to deliver targeted awareness sessions for parents. Conduct workshops to educate schools about the range of emotions parents experience when faced with the possibility that their child is not developing typically, and how to continue working with them in the best interest of the child even under challenging circumstances.
- 4. Integrate Mental Health Support:** Provide access to mental health professionals and counseling services for parents navigating the challenges of raising children with special educational needs.
- 5. Address Financial Barriers:** Inform parents of all their potential options (i.e. Government VS Private Sector, options within the Private Sector). Inform parents of financial assistance provided by Oman's Ministry of Social Development for families of children with a confirmed diagnosis of a disability. Share free online resources and social media platforms that provide valuable information and peer support.
- 6. Provide Culturally Sensitive Training:** Train educators, healthcare providers and social workers on culturally sensitive communication and engagement strategies for working with families. Create awareness amongst educators and healthcare providers about how to navigate these potential barriers with the aim of continuing to work towards the best interest of the child.

Post-School Transitions; How can we equip special education students for successful transitions to further education and employment?

The transition from school to further education, employment or other meaningful adult pursuits is a critical juncture for all students, particularly those with special educational needs, and continues to be a challenge for most countries in the world (OECD, 2011). For special education students, this transition can present unique challenges, requiring specialised support and tailored interventions (Beyer & Meek, 2020; Ross-Levesque et al., 2024).



“Intentional and systematic efforts to provide individuals, groups, and organisations with the information, abilities, and tactics needed to establish and maintain diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environments are what make up professional development for inclusion” (Vimala, 2023, 42). The Post-School Transitions group highlighted numerous challenges and opportunities for growth within this area, as outlined below.

Inflexible curriculum requirements, whereby students are required to pass all subjects irrespective of their educational needs and profile present

a substantial issue in relation to post-school transitions, as such structures significantly contribute to **high dropout rates** among such students which in turn impact their eligibility to access further education opportunities (Cornish, 2023; OECD, 2011; Rossiter & Konate, 2023). Arguably, this also links to a **lack of consistency in policy development and implementation**, including those policies that promote equitable education. This begs the question, how can we promote synergy between schools and institutes of higher or further education to ensure the establishment and continuity of equitable education, alternative pathways to leaving school and into productive career paths?

This is also in contradiction to Oman's Vision 2040 Report, whereby inclusive education and life-long learning are part of the strategic direction of the country, and further states:

‘The priority of Education, Learning, Scientific Research and National Capabilities focuses on developing the educational system at all levels in a manner that equips graduates with the competencies, capabilities, and skills necessary to enter the labour market competitively, meeting the productivity and quality standards required for building a knowledge-based economy.’

(Oman Vision 2040 Report, 2024, p.12)

Currently, **existing vocational programs to support post-school transitions within Oman are limited**, and tend to primarily focus on developing handicrafts, well-being, carpentry and agriculture. Alternative Educational Pathways are a key priority in Oman's 2040 Vision Report, stating that such programs ‘focus on providing opportunities and alternatives for post-basic education students to select educational tracks that align with their abilities and interests’ (2024, p. 20). Furthermore, **parents often bear the primary responsibility** for supporting their children in these programs financially, physically and/or emotionally (Duma & Shawa, 2019; El Shourbagi, 2017). There are even greater challenges for those seeking to access further education, beginning with **seeking accurate diagnostic assessments**, as well as **associated waiting lists and high costs** (Pandey & Agarwal, 2013). Overall, it transpired that there are a wider range of opportunities for those with physical disabilities, as opposed to those individuals with specific learning needs or mental disabilities (Gow, Mostert and Drayer, 2020; Hill, 2022). Whilst it is imperative that children are set up to be life-long learners, the very limited available options does not support this. By prioritizing the below recommendations, Oman can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers special education students to achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

Understanding the Barriers

Whilst some alternative pathways exist for students who do not follow the traditional academic route, significant barriers persist:

- A. Limited Vocational Options:** Although technical colleges offer valuable vocational training, options for special education students remain limited.
- B. Challenges in Accessing Further Education:** special education students face numerous obstacles in accessing higher education, including difficulties obtaining accurate diagnoses and professional reports required by universities. The long waiting lists and high costs associated with assessments

at recognized institutions like Al-Masarra Hospital or SQUH create further barriers.

C. Inconsistent Policy Implementation: While policies promoting equity exist, inconsistent implementation and long waiting lists for specialized services and schools limit their effectiveness.

D. Inflexible Curriculum Requirements: Rigid curriculum structures that require students to pass all subjects, regardless of their individual educational needs, contribute to high dropout rates among special education students.

Actions for Impactful Change & Policy Recommendations

To empower special education students to navigate post-school transitions effectively, we propose the following policy actions:

- 1. Expand Vocational Training Opportunities:** Develop a wider range of vocational training programs tailored to the diverse needs and interests of special education students, including those with mental disabilities. Explore partnerships with local businesses and industries to create internship opportunities and apprenticeships.
- 2. Improve Access to Higher Education Opportunities:** Develop alternative pathways for school leaver certificates/qualifications. Identify and recognise young adults with educational needs who have performed exceptionally given their circumstances by awarding them scholarships to institutes of further education. Develop inclusive services and support teams within institutes of higher education to carry out assessments and follow up on the learning journey of special education students.
- 3. Improve Access to Diagnosis and Assessment:** Increase the availability of qualified professionals to conduct timely and affordable assessments for special education students. Streamline the process for obtaining the necessary documentation required by higher education institutions.
- 4. Ensure Equitable Policy Implementation:** Monitor and strengthen the implementation of existing policies to ensure that special education students have equitable access to support services and educational opportunities. Reduce waiting lists for specialized schools and programs.
- 5. Implement Flexible Curriculum Pathways:** Introduce flexible curriculum options and alternative assessment methods that accommodate the diverse learning needs of special education students.
- 6. Introduce Early Career Exploration:** Provide internship opportunities for special education students during middle and high school to expose them to different career paths and develop valuable work experience.
- 7. Maintain Comprehensive Student Records:** Develop a system for maintaining up-to-date records of student educational needs, including diagnoses, support needs and accommodations, to facilitate smooth transitions to higher education or employment.

Assistive Technology

How can we leverage assistive technology to create more accessible and inclusive learning environments?

Assistive Technology (AT) plays a crucial role in creating accessible and inclusive learning environments, empowering special education students to access the curriculum and participate fully in their education. This is further recognized as part of Oman's 2040 Vision Report (2024), in building the education system, which aims to ‘...[fortify] educational institutions with highly qualified faculty, modernizing infrastructure and **technological resources.**’ (p. 8).



The Assistive Technology Think Tank Group highlighted existing AT resources, including:

- Built-In Accessibility Features; Microsoft Edge's accessibility features such as Read Aloud, Immersive Reader and Dictate are readily available and offer valuable support for students.
- Specialized Software & Apps; Tools like Seeing AI, Read Aloud, YouTube's translation and captioning features, and learning platforms such as Microsoft Teams assignments are being used to enhance accessibility.
- Free Educational Resources; Programs like Epic-Reading and assistive AI tools such as Napkin-AI and AI Story provide additional learning support. Other AI tools include Diffit, Magic Schools and Perplexity.
- Existing Infrastructure; Computer labs and smart screens are available in public schools, providing a foundation for integrating AT. However, significant disparities exist between public and private schools in terms of AT availability and exposure.

Based on the above, it is apparent that there was a **particularly heavy focus on computer based or digital based softwares and devices**, reflecting the current notion that AT is synonymous with computers or digital devices (Fernandez-Batanero et al., 2022). This could be explained by the trend towards integration of digital tools in AT, **due to the advancement of technology and demand for accessible educational solutions** (Chambers, 2020; Gonzalez & White, 2023). However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) clarifies that “...the term ‘assistive technology device’ means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.” (§1401). Specifically, **AT encompasses a wide range of non-digital tools** (wheelchairs, slant boards or tables, adaptive scissors, dictaphones, colour overlays, reading rulers) **as well as digital tools** (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, screen readers, audiobooks, writing support software...etc). For additional clarity and consistency of interpretation, a definition of Assistive Technology can be found in the glossary of terms.

The presence of teachers representing both government and private sectors within this group highlighted a **discrepancy in their accessibility to AT tools, and therefore their students**. Significant disparities to accessibility of such tools exist between public and private schools around the world (Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2022; Omotunde, 2021). This is a clear barrier, with substantial evidence supporting the argument that both the **perceived or actual high costs of implementing AT in education prevent educators and learners from accessing much-needed tools** (Alananbeh & Asha, 2023; Alnahdi, 2022; Ameteppee & Anastasiou, 2021). However, given the crucial role of AT in advancing equitable education and accessibility for all, it is imperative that greater steps are taken to adopt its use. Initiatives such as the World Bank's Ed Tech Approach, highlights the move towards the term 'Educational Technology' with the view of '...[supporting] and [enriching] teaching and learning and [improving] education management and delivery.' (Hawkins et al., 2020).

Other barriers linked to the cost and management of the use of AT were raised. By working towards implementing the recommendations below, Oman can create a stronger, more inclusive education system that empowers special education students to access the curriculum and participate fully in their education.

Understanding the Barriers

Despite positive developments in school's adoption of AT tools, several challenges hinder the widespread and effective implementation of AT in most or all schools within Oman:

- A. Funding Constraints:** The high cost of AT devices and software creates a significant barrier, particularly for under-resourced public schools. Insufficient funding limits access to a wide range of tools.
- B. Lack of Teacher Training:** Many educators lack the necessary training and support to effectively integrate AT into their teaching practices. This includes a lack of familiarity with available tools, limited understanding of how to select appropriate AT for individual student educational needs, and insufficient time for professional development.
- C. Time Constraints for Teachers:** Integrating AT effectively requires dedicated time for teachers to explore new tools, implement them in their classrooms, and evaluate their impact. Current workloads and limited professional development time create significant barriers.

Actions for Impactful Change & Policy Recommendations

To maximise the potential of AT for inclusive education in Oman, the following policy actions are recommended:

- 1. Increase Funding for Assistive Technology:** Prioritize funding for AT devices, software and training programs within the education budget. Explore partnerships with private sector organizations and philanthropic foundations to supplement public funding.
- 2. Prioritize Teacher Training and Support:** Provide comprehensive training for all educators on the effective use of AT, including how to select appropriate tools, adapt teaching practices, and personalise learning experiences for students with diverse needs.
- 3. Allocate Dedicated Time for AT Integration:** Provide teachers with dedicated time for professional development, lesson planning, and collaboration with support staff to effectively integrate AT into their classrooms.

- 4. Develop an Assistive Technology Implementation Plan:** Create a national strategy for implementing AT in schools, outlining clear goals, times and responsibilities. Establish an ongoing evaluation process to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement.
- 5. Address the Public-Private Gap:** Implement policies and funding strategies to ensure greater equity in AT access and utilization between public and private schools.

Appendix 1

Conference Programme for Day One; Saturday 1st February

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 - 8:30	Registration & Refreshments
8:30 - 9:20	Opening Remarks The Holy Quran Welcome to the OIC 2025 by Nigel Fossey (The Sultan School) Country Vision on Inclusive Education by Janaab Sayyida Dr. Shariffa Al-Said (Oman's Ministry of Education) Opening Remarks by Dina Al-Khalili (Al Jisr Foundation) About the Conference & Introductions to Daniel Sobel (Inspire Educational Consultancy)
9:20 - 10:00	Key Note Speech: Lessons From 135 Countries on Making Schools Inclusive by Daniel Sobel
10:00 - 10:20	Refreshment Break
10:20 - 10:45	Multisectoral Collaboration to Support Inclusive Education Presentation by Sumaira A. Chowdhury of UNICEF
10:45 - 12:00	Behaviour as Communication & When Inclusion Goes Wrong Workshop by Daniel Sobel
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch & Prayer Break
1:00 - 2:00	The Inclusive Classroom: Techniques and Approaches That Work in Building Inclusive Classrooms Workshop by Daniel Sobel & Sarah Johnson
2:00 - 2:30	Emotional & Mental Wellbeing in Inclusion Presentation by Raja'a Sultan
2:30 - 3:00	Question and Answer Session & Discussions Plenary by a Panel of Professionals

OIC 2025 Programme Overview for Day Two: Sunday 2nd February 2025

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 - 9:00	Registration & Networking Breakfast
9:00 - 9:10	Welcome & Introductions by Nigel Fossey & Sarah Al-Maawali
9:10 - 9:40	The Impact of Inclusion From the Perspective of a Parent by Laila Al-Maawali This is Noora
9:40 - 10:15	Introduction to Think Tank Sessions by Daniel Sobel A History and Overview of the 5 Key Questions
10:15 - 10:30	Refreshment Break
10:30 - 11:45	Think Tank Sessions by Local & International Facilitators Including Daniel Sobel, Sarah Johnson, Nigel Fossey, Sarah Al-Maawali, Lanya Al-Kiyumi, Ohood Al-Hasani, Jinan Helou, Nadia Sultan, Rafif Al-Jafari and Kirk McCullough
11:45 - 12:15	Feedback Gathering Session by Daniel Sobel
12:15 - 1:15	Lunch & Prayer Break
1:15 - 1:45	The Global Inclusion Teaching Initiative by The International Forum of Inclusion Practitioners
1:45 - 2:00	Closing Speech by Inspire Educational Consultancy

Appendix 2

Summary of Conference Participants and Representing Organizations

Table A1. Participant Professions

Profession Category	Number of Participants
Teachers	32
Special Needs/Learning Support Teachers	20
Special Educational Needs Coordinators/Heads of Learning Support	19
Ministry of Education - Special Education Supervisors/Advisors	6
Counsellors/Psychologists/Psychiatrists/Speech Therapists/Head of Pastorals/Behavior Therapists/Occupational Therapists/Educational Therapists	28
Principals/Asst Principals/Head of Sections/Head of Depts/Directors/Admins/Coordinators	23
The Sultan's School Board of Directors	8
Chief Executive Officers/Owners/Founders/Parents	5
Others - Interns/Students/Librarians	3
Total	144

Table A2. Types of Representing Organizations

Organization Type	Number of Organizations
Schools	25
Ministry of Education - Schools	8
Ministry of Education - Others	8
Nursery	1
Universities/Institutes/Academies	4
Associations/Clinics/Consultancies	6
Self-employed/Independent practitioners	2
Total	54

Appendix 3

Profiles of Session Facilitators

Facilitator	Profile/Description
Daniel Sobel	Mr. Daniel Sobel (FRSA) is the Founder and Chair of IFIP and CEO of Inclusion Expert. He has authored three best-selling books, over 90 articles, and the Master's in Inclusive Educational Leadership at the University of Buckingham. He is a leading keynote speaker on inclusive education internationally.
Sarah Al-Maawali	Sarah Al-Maawali is an experienced educator and Inclusion Education Consultant based in Oman. Formerly a Learning Support Coordinator, she now supports schools in enhancing inclusive practice through consultations, professional development workshops, forums, and audits. She also contributes her expertise at both local and international education conferences.
Nigel Fossey	Nigel Fossey MBE is the Principal of The Sultan's School. With 30 years of experience, he has held various leadership roles globally, including Head of King's College School Panamá and Americas Education Director for Inspired. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and was awarded an MBE in 2024 for services to British education overseas.
Sarah Johnson	Sarah Johnson (NPQH MA FCCT FRSA) represents the International Forum for Inclusion Practitioners. With over 20 years in education, she has worked across diverse settings and authored several books on behaviour and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. She also contributes to national education policy through her role with the Department for Education's Alternative Provisions stakeholder group (U.K.).
Nadia Sultan	Nadia Sultan is the founder of Inspire Educational Consultancy, Oman's first Educational Psychology consultation service. She has over two decades of experience as an EP both in the UK and in Oman. Since setting up IEC, she has collaborated with various schools and early years settings, set up professional networks, offered training opportunities, and created a Directory of Services for schools and families.
Ohood Al-Hasni	Ohood Al-Hasani, a dedicated Support for Learning teacher at Al Sahwa Schools, is deeply committed to fostering inclusive student-centred environments. She consistently seeks meaningful opportunities for growth and learning, ensuring that every child -regardless of ability- feels supported, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential.
Jinane Helou	With over 18 years at ABA Oman International School, Jinane is the University and Careers Counsellor. She has served in various leadership, teaching, and advisory roles, including on the Board of Directors. Holding a Master's in Educational Leadership, she is dedicated to guiding students

	through their higher education journey while building meaningful connections between schools, students, and universities around the world.
Lamya Al-Kiyumi	Lamya Al Kiyumi is the founder and CEO of Generation Now, an educational consultancy based in Muscat, Oman. With expertise in university admissions counseling, strategic development, and board governance, she has led initiatives such as ABA Oman International School's award-winning "New Beginnings" campaign. Lamya actively contributes to educational conferences and inclusion-focused programs.
Rafif Al-Jafari	Rafif Jafari is an Inclusive Education Consultant and educator with over 20 years of experience across the UAE, Palestine, and Oman. She holds a Master's in Inclusive Education from the University of Manchester and is currently Secondary Head of Additional Support at The Sultan's School. Rafif provides consultancy in Special Educational Needs, English as an Additional Language, Universal Design for Learning, and trauma-informed practices.
Kirk McCullough	Kirk McCullough is an international educator with over a decade of experience teaching diverse learners around the world. He's passionate about using educational technology to make learning more accessible, especially for students with disabilities or learning challenges.

Appendix 4

Key and Guiding Questions from Think Tank Sessions

1. The Teacher's Role	
Key Question:	How can we best equip educators to effectively engage diverse learners?
Guiding Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What prevents teachers from jumping onboard the inclusion bandwagon? 2. What works or does not work in classrooms and schools to build inclusive teaching and learning practices? 3. What is effective in teacher training? 4. Where do we think the challenges are? 5. Where do we think some of the solutions may be?
2. Safe & Welcoming Schools	
Key Question:	How can we create inclusive learning environments that prioritize the well-being of all?
Guiding Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the principles in building safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments? 2. What is effective in building a learner's psychosocial competencies? 3. What access do schools have to training on the well-being and mental health of their students?
3. Parental & Community Involvement	
Key Question:	How can we strengthen the role of parents and communities in supporting inclusive education?
Guiding Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scalable initiatives involving parents and communities. 2. What are the barriers parents face in pursuing an assessment/diagnosis within the context of Oman? 3. What is the emotional journey of parents when faced with the possibility that their child is developing differently? 4. What support is there for parents on this journey? 5. How can we break cultural stigmas that prevent parents from seeking support for their children?
4. Post-School Transitions	
Key Question:	How can we equip students with disabilities for successful transitions to further education and employment?
Guiding Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What alternatives are schools providing for those students who are unable to access the traditional route/curricula to leaving school? 2. What alternatives are local colleges/universities providing for students who are unable to access traditional curricula post school? 3. Is there a discrepancy between what is available for young men and young women?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What support is there in managing the transition of individuals from school into a post-school setting? And then also into the labour market? What opportunities are currently available within the labour market for people of determination?
5. Assistive Technology	
Key Question:	How can we leverage assistive technology to create more accessible and inclusive learning environments?
Guiding Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What assistive technology is currently being utilized within school settings to support learners? What are the challenges in rolling out the use of assistive technology in schools? What more can be done to support teachers in implementing both assistive technology and artificial intelligence in an inclusive manner? What programs have you previously used or been exposed to that you have found helpful in supporting an individual with additional needs?

Glossary of Terms

Alternative Pathways: Alternative Pathways, also referred to as Multiple and Flexible Pathways (MFPs), provide non-traditional routes for learners who cannot access formal education. These pathways are flexible, adaptable to diverse needs, and can include formal, non-formal, and cross-sectoral programs. They offer multiple entry and re-entry points to support inclusive and lifelong learning.

Anecdotal Evidence: Information or evidence based on reports of individual cases rather than systematic research or analysis. Sometimes informally referred to as *anecdota*. (Oxford University Press, 2024)

Assistive Technology: Equipment, devices, apparatuses, services, systems, processes and environmental modifications used by people with disabilities to overcome social, infrastructural and other barriers to learning independence, safe and easy participation in learning activities, and full participation in society. (UNESCO, 2020b)

Child-Centred Approach: A Child-Centred Approach places the child at the heart of the learning process, recognizing their individual needs, interests, and rights. It emphasizes active participation, holistic development (cognitive, emotional, social, and physical), and supportive learning environments. Terms like *holistic education*, *whole-child approach*, and *student-centred learning* are often used interchangeably, all focusing on nurturing every aspect of a child's potential.

Disabilities: WHO defines disability as “an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. It denotes the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)”. (World Health Organization, 2001)

Equitable Education: An equitable education system provides every student with the support and resources they need to reach their full potential, no matter their personal or social circumstances. (OECD, n.d.)

Further Education: Post-secondary education, including higher education, adult education, and vocational education and training. (Vocational Education and Training Glossary, n.d.)

Healthcare Professionals: Health professionals study, advise on or provide preventive, curative, rehabilitative and promotional health services based on an extensive body of theoretical and factual knowledge in diagnosis and treatment of disease and other health problems. The knowledge and skills required are usually obtained as the result of study at a higher educational institution in a health-related field for a period of 3–6 years leading to the award of a first degree or higher qualification. (World Health Organization, 2019). Types of healthcare professionals who support inclusion include medical doctors, nurses, community health workers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, and social workers.

Higher Education: Includes all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities. (UNESCO, 2003)

Inclusion: UNESCO views inclusion as “a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning.” (UNESCO, 2005)

Inclusion Leaders: Inclusion leaders are individuals in educational settings who are committed to ensuring that all learners—regardless of age or ability—access meaningful, high-quality education within their local community alongside peers. By setting a shared vision, building the skills of staff and partners, and drawing on evidence and expertise, they work collaboratively to create an inclusive learning environment where all students are engaged and can achieve their full potential. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015)

Inclusive Pedagogy and/or Practice: Inclusive pedagogy refers to ‘an approach to teaching and learning that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners, but avoids the marginalisation that can occur when some students are treated differently’. (Florian, 2014)

Learning Needs: Specific areas where a student requires support to bridge the gap between their current level of understanding or performance and the expected learning outcomes. These needs can relate to knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors. Learning needs are identified through various methods such as assessments, observations, and self-reflection, and guide the planning of targeted instruction and support. (Baloochi Beydokhti et al., 2020)

Mental Disabilities: Mental disabilities refer to a broad range of conditions that affect cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning. In both children and adults, these may include intellectual disabilities (e.g., developmental delays, learning disabilities) and psychosocial disabilities (e.g., anxiety, depression, autism spectrum disorders, and schizophrenia).

Post-School Transition: The process through which young people move from secondary education into adulthood, including higher education, vocational training, employment, or independent living.

Psychosocial Development: Psychosocial development refers to the growth of an individual’s emotional, social, and psychological well-being across the lifespan. It involves the formation of identity, relationships, self-concept, and coping skills, often shaped by interactions with family, peers, and society. The concept is widely associated with Erik Erikson’s theory (Erikson, 1963), which outlines key developmental stages where individuals face and resolve specific social and emotional challenges.

Senior Leadership Teams: Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) are composed of key decision-makers in a school—such as principals, vice-principals, department heads, and academic coordinators—who are responsible for setting strategic direction, managing school operations, and ensuring high standards of teaching, learning, and student wellbeing. They guide policy implementation, oversee staff development, and support overall school improvement.

Support Staff: Non-teaching personnel in educational settings who assist with the day-to-day functioning of schools and help ensure a safe, efficient, and supportive learning environment. This includes roles such as administrative assistants, teaching assistants, IT technicians, maintenance staff, librarians, and counsellors.

Student Support Services: Refers to a range of programs and professionals within educational institutions that provide academic, emotional, social, and developmental assistance to students.

These services may include learning support, counselling, academic advising, psychological services, health and wellness programs, and career guidance.

Transitions: Transitions refer to the changes learners experience as they move between different phases, settings, or environments within the education system. This includes shifts between physical classrooms, changes from one year level to the next, or transfers between schools. These transitions can affect a student's academic progress, emotional wellbeing, and sense of belonging, and often require intentional support to ensure continuity and stability in learning.

Vocational Programs: Learning which aims to acquire knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences – either job-specific or transversal – required in specific occupations or more broadly on the labour market. (Cedefop, 2021)

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