



Students with Disabilities and Global Education

By **GARY BUNCH**

Professor of Education, York University

and **ANGELA VALEO**

Teacher, Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board

Global education advances the position that all members of any community, be it nation, city, village, or school, need to work together for the betterment of humankind (Greig, Pike, & Selby, 1989; Jones, 1993; Pike & Selby, 1988). *All* is construed to signify that no difference traditionally seen as separating members of a community should be permitted to interfere with collaborative effort, whether the difference be one of ability level, culture, gender, or race. Vestal (1994) cites Leestma's elements of global education which begin with:

1. Unity and diversity of humankind: a concern with the commonalities of all people, with the fact that certain basic human concerns and needs are shared by all men and women.
2. International human rights: basic to human dignity and the achievement of the individual's potential. (p. 14)

Such a position melds comfortably with that of those whose particular concern for the betterment of humankind is inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classrooms of community schools. Global education's focus on the unity and diversity of humankind and on human rights and dignity ring with familiarity and meaning for advocates of inclusive education. These are the very things which have been held away from individuals with disabilities by educational systems across the globe.

Global Education and Ability Level

A review of representative literature on global education, however, suggests a disparity in implementation of the philosophy of diversity described by Vestal. Diversity of ability level does not attract the attention granted culture, gender, and race. A search of the educational database ERIC revealed 6,146 entries dealing with global educa-

tion. Only 18 emerged when terms such as disability, special education, exceptional-ity, or handicap were paired with global education in the search. The journal *International Education* published eight articles treating topics around disability between 1983 and 1996. A check of the indices of a range of other publications elaborating aspects of global education indicated much more concern around culture, gender, and race issues than with issues around ability

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level. In most instances considerable discussion was given over to the former areas, whereas ability level received passing attention or no mention at all.

An Explanation

Such findings were not unexpected. Only recently has education turned its attention to inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms of community schools. Developed countries have been content with their practice of assigning students identified as disabled to full-time or part-time segregated educational placements. Advocacy for placements in regular classes for all or the great majority of students with disabilities is a recent and controversial movement in many developed countries. The mind set of the majority of educators (and politicians) is one of comfort with established structures and discomfort with the idea of rocking a boat which is not overtly sinking. Similarly, recent concern in many developing countries has been the need to offer education to students with disabilities at all. Educators have documented the struggle in many countries to provide

any level of education to this group.

Taken as a totality, the global picture for students with disabilities is one of provision of segregated education, or of little to no education of any kind. Those jurisdictions with segregated facilities are satisfied with them. Those just initiating an educational offering are patterning themselves on the familiar model of segregated facilities and specialist teachers.

Obstacles to Equitable Participation

For a variety of reasons, the voices of those concerned with disability have not been heard as clearly as those of other groups calling for recognition, acceptance, and equity of place in the struggle of humankind to move into the future in accord with a new and progressive philosophical vision. These reasons may be best seen in the model of education for students with challenging needs adopted by many developed countries and being emulated by many others.

Years ago, faced with the challenge of educating students whose challenges had previously kept them out of school, educators developed a model based on separate schools, separate classes, and specialist teachers, all designed to meet the specific educational needs of such students. At the time, provision of education for all children was a great leap forward and promised to heighten achievement and acceptance of students marginalized by society, and definitely not accorded many basic rights. Bunch (1994) described the evolution of society's educational interactions with students with challenging needs, referring to this stage of proliferation of special education as "Inclusion by Disability: The Segregated System." To many, the growth of a segregated special education system paralleling the system for regular students appeared to carry with it basic human rights, to dignify the status of those with disabilities, and to include them in the process of advancement envisioned in movements such as global education. It was a forward looking movement and a promising experiment for its time.

Unfortunately, educators tended to rest on their laurels. Though a variety of telling analyses of segregated education suggest that this model has not achieved its promise and that more can be done, many educators resist moving toward more progressive models. Greig, Pike, and Selby (1989) review a variety of obstacles to

change in the directions advocated by global educators including polarization, isolation, fragmentation, Messianic zeal, and confusion (pp. 151-154). Mitchell, Grin, and Sobel (1977) noted other obstacles to progressive movements rising from use of knowledge to isolate, objectify, and specialize (p. 45). All these factors have influenced resistance to educational change for students with challenging needs, change which would promote acceptance of diversity within humankind.

Perhaps the most significant controlling factor has been education's affair with the medical model which traditionally has been more concerned with the intactness of the human organism than with societal acceptance and the potential of every individual to contribute to society. Special education has embraced psychometric objective evaluation, specialized teachers, specialized programs, and the value of segregation as a support to personal growth in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. There exists a mind set among many educators which regards students with challenging needs as in need of remediation to "fix" that which is viewed as "broken" in them. Degree of brokenness is the concern and the greater degree of commonality with all others is relegated to the background. What is broken must be fixed in special placements by special teachers using special programs before the student can return to the company of her/his peers. There is no time for exploration of curricular areas such as those suggested by Pike and Selby (1988). Even for students who are integrated part-time in regular classrooms the focus remains skill remediation in most instances. Regular and special education teachers see little time for adventuring into the curricular approaches suggested for global education. As pointed out by Valeo (1994) in a study of teacher and administrator views of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms, "Teachers ... believed that exceptional students would benefit more from attending a special education class than from being integrated into the mainstream classroom" (p. 38). This mind set is held firmly by many despite mounting research evidence that the effect of inclusion, comparatively, is positive and worthwhile, even if not huge (Baker, Wang, and Walberg, 1994/5). Until it is realized that the existing dominant view of the place of students with challenging needs in the world is flawed and limiting, their participation in curricular directions

which will widen their conceptual and perceptual understandings of the world, the people in it, and its needs will be less than it should be and can be.

Fortunately, the inclusive model of education, which is closely aligned to global education philosophy and practice, is gaining ground. Increasing numbers of parents, educators, and even governments have realized that education must move from the experiment of segregated special education to an inclusive or integrated model. UNESCO pointed out in 1988 that 43 of 74 African, European, Arab State, Asian, and Latin American nations responding to an educational survey are at various points in implementing policies favouring integration. At present, however, the need to argue the case of those with disabilities with the same level of voice as that accorded to other groups traditionally denied equitable participation in shaping the future of world society has not been widely recognized.

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Humane Education

Challenging Anthropocentrism in the Curriculum

By DAVID SELBY

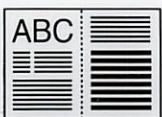
Professor, International Institute for Global Education, OISE/UT

Humane education is, perhaps, the least known and canvassed of the new "educations" that have emerged in recent times. It is a field with an ambitious project that very much overlaps with the territories that proponents of other educations — anti-discriminatory, development, environmental, human rights, and peace educators, to list some, consider theirs. "Humane education," writes Cindy Milburn (1992, p. 2), "is a vast subject area covering our treatment of animals, each other and the Earth we live on. Its objective is to achieve compassionate change which challenges the selfish and anthropocentric attitudes that have encouraged exploitation of each

other, animals and the world to the point where we are now threatening our very survival on the planet. Humane education aims to provide the basis for responsible planetary citizenship."

Such commendable and all-encompassing goals notwithstanding, a perusal of current humane education curricula and learning materials suggests that, in its practical expression, the field tends to narrow its focus to animal-related issues. The realization of an unfractured compassion and seamless sense of justice extending to all of humankind, to individual animals, and to all species and ecosystems remains largely a matter of faith, not strategy. There is, more often than not, less than complete conjunction between the broad goals embraced by the field and the (relatively) confined focus of the teaching/learning programs and resources available.

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