rfm
Revista *de la* Facultad *de* Medicina

EDITORIAL

Inclusive education in Colombia

Educación inclusiva en Colombia

Open access

How to cite: Lara-Díaz MF. [Inclusive education in Colombia]. Rev. Fac. Med. 2023;71(4):e114247. English. doi: https://doi.org/10.15446/revfacmed.v71n4.114247.

Cómo citar: Lara-Díaz MF. [Educación inclusiva en Colombia]. Rev. Fac. Med. 2023;71(4):e114247. English. doi: https://doi.org/10.15446/revfacmed.v71n4.114247.

Copyright: Copyright: ©2023 Universidad Nacional de Colombia. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, as long as the original author and source are credited.

Inclusive education is based on the principle that all students, regardless of their background, abilities or disabilities, should have access to and participate in quality education on an equal basis.[1-3] While this concept is apparently straightforward, its implementation poses significant challenges and requires concerted efforts by various stakeholders.

By creating learning environments that embrace diversity and foster respect for all, inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities, but also enhances the overall educational experience of other students. It also promotes empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging among students, thus contributing to a more diverse and cohesive society.[1-3]

Colombia, like many countries, has made progress in promoting inclusive education. The enactment of Law 115 of 1994[4] and the adoption of the standards established in the World Health Organization's International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[5] have laid important foundations for promoting inclusive practices in schools.

Notwithstanding the above, for inclusive education to become a reality in the country, adequate planning is required before implementing public policies on inclusive education. This implies solving problems such as lack of infrastructure and resources, insufficient teacher training in inclusive pedagogies, and attitudinal barriers that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses policy reforms, capacity building, and societal changes in attitudes toward disability and diversity.

In light of these opportunities and challenges, it is imperative that we, as a society, commit to making progress in inclusive education, as the implementation of such public policies requires investing in teacher training and in the development of the necessary infrastructure for the provision of support services for students with disabilities; fostering a culture of inclusion and respect for diversity at all levels of society; and promoting collaboration among various sectors of society, such as government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the community in general.

In this regard, in this issue of the Revista de la Facultad de Medicina, Guerrero & Rojas-Romero[6] analyze the role of speech-language pathologists in the educational context of Colombia in their article *Opportunities and challenges for speech-language pathologists to move towards inclusive education in Colombia,* and propose some actions to vindicate their role in inclusion and equity in education by removing environmental barriers and strengthening the capabilities of students according to their characteristics, as this promotes social cohesion and equity.

Guerrero & Rojas-Romero[6] state that inclusive education is part of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations (Quality Education), which emphasizes the promotion of quality learning opportunities for all. According to the authors, in order to

achieve this goal, it is necessary to carry out structural reforms of the educational system, which means that there is still much to be done in Colombia to ensure that the entire population receives quality education that meets their needs.

It is worth noting that the article by Guerrero & Rojas-Romero[6] focuses on the current state of speech-language pathology in the Colombian education system, reviews the scope and competencies of speech-language pathologists as experts in human communication that address the processes of hearing, speech and language, and analyzes how their role has been blurred as they have assumed the functions of a support teacher. Likewise, the potential of speech therapists in the promotion of communicative skills as learning tools is highlighted.

Finally, I urge readers to engage with the ideas discussed here and, as Guerrero & Rojas-Romero[6] do, to join our collective efforts to promote inclusive education in Colombia since they will help us build a more inclusive, equitable and compassionate society, in which every individual has the opportunity to thrive and reach their potential.

María Fernanda Lara Díaz
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2896-8852
Associate Professor, Department of Human Communication, Faculty of Medicine, Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Bogotá D.C., Colombia.
Email: mflarad@unal.edu.co

References

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Global Education Monitoring Report. Inclusion and education: all means all. Paris: UNESCO; 2020.
2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). What you need to know about inclusion in education. Paris: UNESCO; 2023.
3. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Inclusive education. Every child has the right to quality education and learning. New York: UNICEF.
4. Colombia. Congreso de la República. Ley 115 de 1994 (febrero 8): Por la cual se expide la ley general de educación. Bogota D.C.: Diario Oficial 41214; February 8 1994.
5. Organización Mundial de la Salud. Convención sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad. New York and Geneva: OMS; 2008.
6. Guerrero Y, Rojas-Romero CJ. Opportunities and challenges for Speech-language pathologists to move towards inclusive education in Colombia. Rev Fac Med. 2023;71(4):e104651. https://doi.org/msks.