

A National Workshop on Curriculum and Instructional Adaptation in Higher Education Institutions (CIAHEI)

Department of Special Needs Education,
Addis Ababa University

**Supported by APPEAR Programme of the Austrian
Development Cooperation.**



Feb.01-02/2019

Details of the workshop

Date of the workshop: February 1-2/2019

Venue: Dire International Hotel, Adama, Ethiopia

Preparing Organization-Department of Special Needs Education, Addis Ababa University

Workshop Rapporteur: Mr. Tsegaye Gurba

Pictures: All pictures have been taken by Dr. Alemayehu Tekelemariam

Workshop Participants- Instructors from various universities and teacher education colleges and specifically from departments where students with disabilities attend courses. Such as the department of special needs education, psychology, law, language education, linguistics, social science, social work, and mathematics. In addition, key administrators from students' service, registrar and managing directors attended.

Note: what makes this workshop unique is the invitation letter stating that the participation of females from each University and College was mandatory . As a result an increased number of female academicians attended the workshop.



Female participants

Day one (Feb. 01/2019)

Registration of the workshop participants has been completed at 9:00am. 58 male and 27 female, altogether 85 participants have participated at the workshop.

Dr. Yirgashewa Bekele, the INEDIS project team leader and academic staff at the department of Special Needs Education (SNE) welcomed all the participants and listed out the participants address and checked whether all the invited Colleges and Universities have represented their own personnel in the respective invited departments. Dr. Yirgashewa stated the main objectives of the workshop that it is to discuss and reach on consensus on the nature and importance of curriculum and instructional adaptations in Higher Education Institutions. She also noted that papers will be presented on the issues of curriculum and instructional adaptations to facilitate the discussion for consensus. By saying this, she passed the podium over to Dr. Alemayehu Teklemariam who is INEDIS consortium coordinator to address his welcoming speech and invite the guest of the day.



Dr. Yirgashewa welcome speech

Dr. Alemayehu addressed his welcoming speech and then expressed that all the invited participants came to the workshop. He then extended his wishes and best regards to the participants and emphasized the following to be noted by the participants:

- The participants, after reaching on consensus, should strictly work towards implementing the curriculum and instruction adaptation within their respective institutions and that they also need to urge others to implement it.
- The consensus made by the participants of this workshop should also be part of the major activities of other Universities and Colleges of Teacher Education.

Then Dr. Alemayehu called upon Dr. Deme Abera, delegate of the Dean of College of Education and Behavioral Studies to open the workshop. Dr. Deme addressed his welcoming speech to the participants of the workshop. He noted that the workshop has two main objectives; while the first objective is to inaugurate the inclusion guideline prepared at AAU through the INEDIS project, the other objective is to discuss on the curriculum and instructional adaptation in higher education institutions.

Pertaining the second objective of the workshop, he raised that materials/papers will be presented by scholars from AAU and that participants should give due attention so that invaluable points need to come forward and reach on consensus. He then thanked invited Universities and Colleges of Teacher Education for giving attention to the workshop and sending participants who represent their Organizations/Institutions. He then officially announced that the workshop is open.



Dr. Deme Abera, opening speech

Dr. Yirgashewa, came back with main objectives of the INEDIS project and activities so far been done through the project. In her presentation, she mentioned the sponsoring organization of the project (APPEAR – Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development), how the project is functioning, and all the processes it goes through. She also dealt with the scope of the project. The project, based on the agreements made earlier, operates in four Universities (AAU, University of Gondar, Dilla University and University of Vienna). For these four Universities, she noted, Dr. Alemayehu is coordinating all activities enclosed within the agreement document. The project, AAU wing, as stated by Dr. Yirgashewa, has five team members who are representing different departments within the AAU. She also underlined that the

project only operates in higher education and that every activity is carried out according to the aspects agreed in the project agreement document. She also noted that apart from the team leaders, the project is administered by advisory board members. From all these explanations, she added, one can imagine that the project is not person centered but rather it is activity centered. It all follows the Ethiopian financial administration and only operates within the frameworks it is intended to. After she highlighted the project objectives and the processes it goes through, she introduced that there is an inauguration ceremony of an inclusive education guideline prepared by AAU INEDIS team members.

She then called upon Dr. Alemayehu, the consortium coordinator, to present the processes undertaken during the development of the guideline. Dr. Alemayehu expressed that the guideline was not simply developed by the initiation of the project only, rather it was depending on the finding of the empirical data from survey research. He justified that before developing the guideline, the finding from pre-intervention research was taken in to consideration.

While preparing the guideline, as stated by Dr. Alemayehu, major points such as problem identification or why the guideline was needed, rationales for inclusive education and objective settings were given due emphasis. He also explained that the guideline development focused on four major disability areas such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, and emotional and behavioral difficulties.



Dr. Alemayehu Tekelemariam, presentation

After the presentation of Dr. Alemayehu, on the invitation from Dr. Yirgashewa, Mrs. Meseret Hassen, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Studies, of the University of Gondar

took the opportunity and introduced herself to the audiences and elaborated what has been done so far in their respective college in relation to the project. Mrs. Meseret explained that her college focused and has conducted research on gender-based violence. She notified that her college did tremendous activities on areas of disability and talent and as a result they reached many students with disabilities to use their talents for their lives. She, in addition, explained that her college is conducting a comprehensive research on people with disabilities.

Then, Dr. Yirgashewa, invited Dr. Hussien Kedir, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Studies of AAU for the accomplishment of the guideline inauguration ceremony. Dr. Hussien, after asking for an apology for coming late, he welcomed the participants and then called upon Dr Deme, Associate Dean for the Undergraduate program CEBS, and Dr. Abebe Yehualawork, from the department of SNE to accomplish the inauguration ceremony. Workshop participants welcomed all the inaugurators by clapping their hands and the ravine, which the guideline was enclosed in, was cut in three and an official inauguration was announced by the Dean.



Guideline inauguration

Following the inauguration of the guideline, Dr. Yekoyealem Dessie, Associate Dean for Research and Technology Transfer at the College of Education and Behavioral Studies (CEBS) as stage moderator and Dr. Alemayehu the project coordinator and presenter on the development process of the guideline invited the participants to discuss regarding the dissemination and implementation of the guideline. Much of the ideas raised with regard to the guideline development were very positive and filled with appreciation. Participants admired to have such a guideline at an initial stage and that it is a privilege for the higher education institutions. Finally, all participants reached consensus that the guideline is very important and its implementation should be part of the main

activities of the higher education institutions. As inclusion is a systemic change, the higher education systems should give due attention to the students with disabilities and to do this, participants agreed that the guideline will be part of their universities and/colleges systems.

After lunch break, the main issue of the workshop, curriculum and instructional adaptation in higher education institutions, was dealt with. Dr. Tsegaye, Aregay project team member invited Dr. Abreha Assfaw, the project team member from Curriculum and Instruction department of AAU, to present his paper on the principles of curriculum and instructional adaptation for persons with disabilities in higher educational institutions (HEIs).

In his presentation, Dr. Abreha addressed and emphasized issues such as:

- Curriculum/instruction and inclusive education
- Curriculum and instructional adaptation strategies

In his introductory part, Dr. Abreha pinpointed and emphasized on issues such as:

- Similarities and differences between students – in this point he raised that no two individuals are alike and that every person has unique needs.
- Characteristics of students in higher education institutions- students with and without disability, age difference, economic status, family situations...

The presenter well articulated the role of classroom teachers in responding to the diversified needs of students. He well emphasized the most important terminologies for the consumption of the workshop. Such points as: curriculum, instruction, and inclusion. He justified that if one is missing, nothing will be full. He, as his main concern for inclusion in education in today's society, denied Darwin's theory that states "the survival of the fittest". He said, today, people should be supported in any area, they need to use their potentials and lead an independent life in their society. With regard to the curriculum and instructional adaptation for persons with disabilities, Dr. Abreha addressed nine strategies

- Quantity – item amount, activities, assessment for mastery, etc,
- Time – additional time allotment for test/exam completion
- Level of support – how long the support should be, enhancement of teacher-student relationship, personal support, ...

- Inputs – instructional delivery
- Level of difficulty – skill level, problem type, rules and laws.
- Output – how students can respond to instruction,
- Participation – learner’s involvement in a task
- Alternative goals –what is expected of students on the same theme
- Substitute curriculum – provide different instruction and materials to meet learner’s individual goal mostly for students with moderate to severe disabilities

Dr. Abreha emphasized points such as: classroom teachers should understand that individuals learn differently and need different curriculum adjustments, there is no single best curriculum instructional approach that fits all purposes. As an optional approach he notified that it is good to use multiple instructional approaches and he adjourned his presentation. Dr. Tsegaye, stage moderator, added some important points from his own experience on what curriculum and instruction adaptation is and then he thanked Dr. Abreha for his presentation and gave the stage to the stage leaders of the day.



Dr. Abreha Assfaw, presentation

Dr. Alemayehu invited Dr. Abebe Yehualawork, SNE department member to present his paper on curriculum and instructional adaptation. Dr. Abebe began his presentation by quoting “Only good intension is not enough”.

As an introductory part of his presentation, Dr. Abebe notified three important points:

- In Ethiopia, there is no pro-active education policy that is ready to respond to the diversified needs of students.
- There is limited commitment from different parts of the society, including scholars.
- There is limited innovative thinking and people always stick themselves to copying from other countries.

To alleviate all these and other problems in education, our projects should go into our university's program and be part of the university's systems. He then passed over to **“why is curriculum adaptation so important?”** He listed down some points why curriculum adaptation is important for students with disabilities and/special educational needs. He emphasized on two rationales for the adaptation;

- It is to create conducive/accessible learning environment for students.
- It is to recognize that the difference between students is natural and unavoidable and that this difference should be respected and responded to.

Dr. Abebe tried to define what curriculum adaptation is. He agreed that curriculum adaptation does not have a uniform definition across the world. Some scholars gave due attention to curriculum and instructional adaptation as suiting contents and teaching – learning methodology to the needs of students. The purpose of curriculum and instructional adaptation as stated by Dr. Abebe, is to ease the contents of the course/subject matter, to focus on important knowledge and skills need to be acquired, to avoid detectives, to adjust the lesson with the learning pace of students, etc. He explained that there are four types of making the curriculum and instruction suitable to students. These are: Accommodation, adaptation, parallel curriculum components and overlapping curricula.

Dr. Abebe underlined that these four components need to be part of the curriculum provision to the unique needs of students. He said, the four components stated are very significant in helping students to fully utilize their ability in their day to day lives and to overcome life challenges through making the curriculum and instructional materials accessible to all students. Dr. Abebe also showed the participants such areas of curriculum and instructional adaptation as content knowledge (inputs), conceptual difficulty, goals and methods of instruction. Then he further elaborated each area of the curriculum adjustment for students with disabilities and/or special educational needs as follows.

- a. Accommodation – with no change in curriculum contents and learning out-comes, it is a strategy to adjust the instructional methodologies according to the needs of students. For example: it is possible to accommodate materials presented in oral or written form in audio form, it can also be using technologies suited to students' needs, it can also be time extension for blind students to complete exams. He further explained accommodation as a strategy to gain information through different Medias with no change in content and goals of the information.
- b. Adaptation – using other ways to reach at the intended goal with slight modification in contents, the learning outcome, and standards. For example, as stated by Dr. Abebe, if students are dealing with 10 mathematics questions, a student with learning disability may work on 5 questions only. He cleared out that adaptation allows slight improvement on the difficulty level of the lesson delivered to the students with disabilities.
- c. Parallel curriculum outcome/parallel instruction – this adjustment strategy brings about significant change on conceptual difficulty of the curriculum delivered to students with disabilities. This kind of curriculum adaptation best works for gifted and talented learners. He further depicted that such kind of curriculum adaptation can also be considered as curriculum enrichment.
- d. Overlapping curricula – as clarified by Dr. Abebe, this kind of curriculum adjustment makes significant change on the goal of the instruction as it is based on each student's ability and potential for learning.

According to Dr. Abebe, even though these kinds of curriculum adaptation strategies are there, what matters is the teachers' commitment to prepare lesson plans based on students' ability that paves the ways to creating conducive learning environments. Finally, he, as tips for curriculum and instructional adaptation for students with disabilities, listed 17 points and elaborated each and adjourned his presentation. Then, the stage moderator announced the participants to be at the conference hall at 8:00 a.m. next day and departed.



Dr. Abebe Yehualawork, presentation

Day 2 (Feb. 02/2019)

Participants got ready for the third presentation from the department of Sport Science. Dr. Alemayehu, the stage moderator, welcomed the participants and introduced Dr. Bezabeh Wodie, who is from the Sport Science department, AAU, and gave the podium to the presenter.

Dr. Bezabeh presented his research paper conducted on “Adapted physical education for sport science major deaf/hard of hearing students”. As a starter of his presentation, he quoted William Shakespeare’s quote “knowing what to be”. He stated that every person has the right to move and that movement is so important and that it is also part of life. He presented his paper by relating inclusion in sport to the experience of other countries in the world. He raised the leading principles for inclusion in the sport science field by referring to Graham, 2001.

Dr. Bezabeh also emphasized that good teaching is revealed through the ability of an individual teacher to adapt that curriculum and instruction. Then he talked about the deaf/hard of hearing students in the Sport Science department. He further elaborated that the department admitted five students three years ago and that nowadays the department admitted more than 15 students for the past 2 academic years. He also raised the experience of Korean deaf students who have joined the Sport Science department to pursue their first degree. He further explained that deafness did not exert any influence on deaf student’s judo sport. He explained that deaf students in his respective department loved the sport science and that they even do not want to change to any department if they are given the chance to do so. He, at last, stated that deaf/hard of hearing admitted to the department of Sport Science are by far better than their other hearing peers in their educational performance. He concluded, provided that appropriate support is given to students with disabilities

in higher education through accommodation, adaptation, parallel curriculum and overlapping curricula, it is possible to include them within the regular classroom.

After the presentation of Dr. Bezabeh, Dr. Alemayehu, the stage moderator, summarized every paper presented through his moderations, and then forwarded the stage to the participants for discussion. Participants reflected on all papers presented throughout the workshop; time elapsed by addressing each reflection and question to the individual scholars presented his/her paper. Some of the ideas reflected and questions raised are presented as follows:

- Though there are no legal frameworks to make the curriculum and instruction suitable to learners, the papers presented so far can be used as paving the ways towards establishing those frameworks and hence, the papers presented are timely and valued.
- Participants reflected that there are still problems observed in Ethiopia with regard to making the curriculum and instruction as well as the physical environment assessable to learners with special educational needs and that these remained unsolved issues adversely affected the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities and those with special educational needs.
- In order to make the government and other stakeholders aware about working on the education and training of people with disabilities and special educational needs, participants said, such kinds of awakening workshops and training programs, substantiated with presentations of research findings, should continuously be conducted and serious monitoring and evaluations should be carried out.
- Participants, in their reflection, have valued all presenters with particular admiration to Dr. Abebe, who presented his paper on Curriculum and Instructional Adaptation with its practicality. They added that his presentation took them back and think and re-think on what and how they have been delivering their instruction within their respective institutions.
- The departments of Special Needs and Inclusive Education in all Universities reflected the participants, need to give due attention to the course “Curriculum Instructional Adaptation” as they emphasize on other courses within the department and that the science of adaptation should focus on ‘Adaptation for Inclusion’.

- The workshop participants have also reflected their concerns about the current situations in Higher Education Institutions and forwarded that special attention should be given to those learners with emotional and behavioral difficulties across all Ethiopian Universities so as to minimize and/or eradicate violence observed in Universities today.



Dr Alemayehu and Dr. Yekoyealem, moderating the discussion

Then, the stage moderator, Dr. Alemayehu, allowed the presenters if they have points to reflect on and as a result, Dr. Abebe took the opportunity and thanked all participants for the concerns and ideas they raised and then reflected on few points raised as a concern and threats from the workshop participants. He notified that the support given to people with disabilities starts from the naming process. He also added that support provided to the people with disabilities and special educational needs, including curriculum and instructional adaptations, must be systemic issue and that inclusiveness should be supported by well-defined structure responsibility and accountability. He notified that the local and international legal frameworks, which the government of Ethiopia ratified and made part of its constitution, should be enacted if real inclusion is mandated. He articulated that 1/3rd of the Ethiopian constitution is concerned about human rights but there are still large right violence observed in Ethiopia and added that everybody should try to know the governing rules and laws the country has in order to defend the rights of people with disabilities. He remembered and winded up his reflection by listing where adaptation should take place (at classroom, school , and systemic level).

Dr. Bezabeh, on his part reflected on some few points raised from the participants. He first acknowledged the ideas and concerns raised from the participants and said that teaching is the most difficult task but done without skills and knowledge and that this put our education system in danger. He well-articulated that partial and/or full exemption of students from a given course is a crime and that teachers should not do this crime rather look for strategies to adapt the curriculum

and instruction not only for the benefit of students but also for their own self to escape from mental accuse. Dr. Bezabeh notified that all departments in higher education institutions should collaboratively work with the department of Special Needs Education in order to fully support learners with disabilities and special educational needs.

Dr. Alemayehu, the stage moderator, shared a few things about curriculum and instructional adaptation from his own experiences and then forwarded the podium to Dr. Yirgashewa, she thanked all the paper presenters and the participants for their invaluable contribution for the successful attainment of the workshop objectives and let the participants break for coffee. **After coffee/tea break,** Dr. Yirgashewa, the workshop facilitator, reminded the participants to discuss in groups and pinpoint on the ways forward and divided the participants into groups according to their fields of study such as for example, language, law, educational leadership, curriculum studies (multi-disciplinary courses such as pedagogy, and special needs education). The participants were given ample time so that they could exhaust inputs for the future plan of the project.



Group discussion

Then, each group, after thorough discussions within their respective group, have presented their consensus. Points presented by each group representative are condensed and presented as follows.

- In inclusion processes, the role of the leadership is very significant and hence, due attention should be given to it.
- Awareness raising workshops, trainings, and/or seminars on curriculum and instructional adaptation need to be organized at regional level for all stakeholders.
- Different documents prepared by the Ministry of Education with regard to inclusion should also draw attention and be utilized as inputs for the real inclusion implementation.
- Teachers training curriculum frameworks need to give much attention to the curriculum and instructional adaptation skills attaining target.
- Even though the preparation of the inclusive education guideline is one step forward to attaining the inclusion of learners with disabilities and special educational needs, the implementation and the impact it brings need to be assessed.
- The project should plan and work on systemic change in higher education institutions which is significant in realizing inclusion.
- Accessibility of instructional materials for learners with disability need to be one working area of the project.
- It is advisable to work on developing mutual support between and among learners with and without disabilities.
- One future working area is developing teacher's skills in Braille reading and writing, sign language and adaptive skills so that they are able to include all learners accordingly.
- Making education accessible to all should be seen from the point of view of rights.
- Providing distinct support to female students with disabilities should be done with extraordinary attention as they suffer from double discrimination.
- Universities should include the issue of disability in their community service programs.
- It is better to work on universities to admit all students to all departments need based.
- Work on making curriculum and instructional adaptations to be part of the higher diploma curriculum.
- The issue of curriculum and instructional adaptations need to be the emphasis area of the new Ethiopian education roadmap.

- Sign language interpreters should be increased in quantity and capacity as well.



Group work presentation

Then, Dr. Alemayehu took the opportunity and reflected that the group presentation is well done and that the project should also work with other scholars apart from those who the project is currently working with.

He then extended his felt gratitude and appreciations to all paper presenters; for their invaluable efforts in making the workshop realize its objectives. He also extended his thanks to the participants for their significant contributions in attaining the workshop objectives.

At last, Dr. Yirgashewa, project team leader and workshop facilitator, took the stage and thanked all the presenters as well as the participants for their contributions. She appreciated that the workshop has met its intended objectives and hoped that the important points collected from the participants are considered in the future plan of the project. Finally, participants had a group photo for the memory of the workshop and the role it has in attaining the curriculum and instructional adaptation for persons with disabilities and special educational needs. The two day's workshop, with its validity and significant role in inclusion of learners with disabilities in Higher Education Institutions, is adjourned here at Dire International Hotel, Adama, Ethiopia.



More photos of the participants