REFORMING THE EDUCATION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES IN THE UAE: CASE STUDIES

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The worldwide movement towards the adoption of inclusive education for all learners in regular mainstream schools is apparent, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is steadily heading towards such adoption. The government of the UAE clearly acknowledges the need to educate learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), also known locally as People of Determination (POD), and has made steady steps especially over the last decade to support inclusive education for such learners. This paper offers an overview of the current status of educating learners with SEND in the UAE with a specific focus on recent transformations and innovations in inclusive education in the UAE. It then sheds light on three of several initiatives that are considered innovative and "turning points" in the pursuit of effective inclusive education in the UAE. The paper explores the excitement, the anxiety and the associated challenges that accompany change when reforming education systems, especially when adopting a natural but bold move like inclusive education in a fast developing country.