

CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

**Teacher Education for Inclusion Study
Visit, Linz, Austria**

17th-19th May, 2011



Purpose of presentation

- ◆ To outline some of the current thinking internationally and key debates about inclusive education by presenting views from current literature and from the Teacher Education for Inclusion Project Country Reports



Underpinning beliefs

- ✓ Education is a fundamental human right and a foundation for a more just society
- ✓ Disability is socially constructed – everyone needs support and many forms of support benefit wider groups
- ✓ Sorting, ranking, categorising can obscure strengths and talents - labels should be replaced by useful information to minimise barriers to learning and participation
- ✓ All learners are entitled to an interesting curriculum that is meaningful in context, with consistent pedagogy and assessment that supports learning
- ✓ Quality of life is a key indicator – listen to learners, consider impact on life chances



Equity in Education (OECD, 2007)

Fairness – personal/social circumstances should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential

Inclusion – basic minimum education for all (human rights imperative) leading to a more equitable society, reducing the long term social and financial costs of educational failure and increasing social cohesion.



Some views of inclusion...

- ◆ Diversity

Not about any one group of students, categorisation is minimised, diversity is valued

- ◆ Learning and participation

Removing barriers to learning and participation for all, participation in academic, social and cultural community of the neighbourhood school, every student's right to learn

- ◆ Democracy

All voices should be heard, collaboration essential on all levels



- ♦ The school as a whole
barriers to learning and participation are found in all aspects of a school, not primarily within individual learners, all are learners, inclusion is about cultures and policies as well as practices at all levels, the school as a system has to change
- ♦ The society at large
inclusion and exclusion are related to justice for all in society, inclusion is political and conflictual, a continuous process, not a state that can be reached

Booth, Nes and Strømstad (2004) Developing Inclusive Teacher Education.

A typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion:

- Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
- Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.
- Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.
- Inclusion as developing the school for all.
- Inclusion as 'Education for All'.
- Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.

Ainscow and colleagues, 2006, p15

UNESCO

Policy makers should acknowledge that inclusive education is an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination

(Recommendation of 48th Session of International Conference in Education 2008)



Critical issues?

- ◆ Resources
- ◆ Access and participation
- ◆ Teacher professional development
- ◆ Policy and legislation
- ◆ Whole school reform
- ◆ Identification and placement
- ◆ Assessment, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness
- ◆ Building capacity and sustainability

Peters, S. (2004) Inclusive Education : An EFA strategy for all children. Paper for World Bank

Dilemmas

Who? ...all learners, vulnerable learners, learners with SEN/disability?

Where?...special settings/mainstream school (under the same roof or engaged in a common learning endeavour)

When?... full/part time. Can you be a little bit 'included'?

How?... Focus on diagnosis/label or social/ environmental barriers to learning and participation



Why is inclusive education important? It is a means to...

- ◆ realise the right to high quality education without discrimination and to equal opportunities
- ◆ advance towards more democratic and fair societies
- ◆ improve the quality of education and professional development of teachers
- ◆ learn to live together and build our own identity
- ◆ improve the efficiency and cost-benefit relationship of education systems



What in the pursuit of quality really matters?

..or what kind of education for what kind of world?

‘If your goal is to create a human being who is loving, capable of showing deep caring for others, alive to the spiritual and ethical dimensions of being, ecologically sensitive, intellectually alive, self determining and creative, there are ways of restructuring education to foster this kind of person.’

Lerner, M.(2000) Spirit Matters p224

