Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion

A Review of the Literature

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

EVIDENCE OF THE LINK BETWEEN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full version
Agency:	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
ANED:	Academic Network of European Disability experts
EENEE:	European Experts Network of Economics of Education
EU:	European Union
NESSE:	Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA:	United States of America
VET:	Vocational Education and Training

Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion

FOREWORD

This literature review addresses the link between inclusive education and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. It explains how inclusive education can serve as a tool to promote social inclusion in three areas, namely education, employment and living in the community. The review provides research evidence to suggest that inclusive education is an important prerequisite for the social inclusion of people with disabilities, both during school years and later in life. According to the review, attending inclusive education settings increases the possibilities for participating and interacting with peers at school, obtaining academic and vocational qualifications, being employed, being financially independent, and so on. At the same time, the research findings indicate that attending segregated settings minimises the opportunities for social inclusion.

Following the country representatives' suggestions in a survey by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education in 2015, the project was launched in October 2016, with completion in June 2018. The project's main outcome is this literature review document. There is also a flyer summarising the project findings. Both are available in print and electronic form.

We believe this project is in line with our commitment to support member countries to think critically around issues related to inclusive education, such as its potential to influence social inclusion. Therefore, we consider that this review will be of interest to policy-makers who are committed to developing evidence-based education policies. We also expect that it will be of interest to people with disabilities and their families, practitioners, and researchers.

We hope that you find this review thought-provoking and useful for your work.

Cor J.W. Meijer

Director of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academic literature frequently highlights the link between inclusive education and social inclusion as an important issue, within research exploring either inclusive education or social inclusion. Research examining the link between inclusive education and social inclusion also exists, although it is limited. This research is often conducted in disciplines other than inclusive education, such as sociology and psychology. This may prevent inclusive education stakeholders from being informed about and using research evidence for the benefit of people with disabilities.

This literature review aims to examine the link between inclusive education and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. In particular, two research questions guided the project:

- What is the link between inclusive education and social inclusion?

- What does current research say about inclusive education's potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion?

Inclusive education is understood as the provision of high-quality education in schools that value the rights, equality, access and participation of all learners. Social inclusion is mainly about social interaction and community participation in the areas of education, employment and living in the community.

The review's theoretical background outlines the main issues stemming from the concepts of inclusive education and social inclusion. It examines the extent to which the link between inclusive education and social inclusion is addressed in the literature and within European Union (EU) organisations/networks. It concludes that even though there is a range of definitions related to inclusive education and social inclusion, there are certain common dimensions. Furthermore, despite the stated position that there is a relationship between inclusive education and social inclusion, evidence to support this view is not easily available or coherent.

Following the theoretical background, a dataset of peer-reviewed papers was created for the purposes of the review. The complete dataset includes over 200 papers: most of them report on studies from 1990 onwards that followed different methodologies and methods and were conducted in a range of countries.

This review is an attempt to map research evidence on the impact of inclusive education on social inclusion and underline the complexities around it. It does not intend to report exhaustively all the research evidence collected; rather it aims to highlight patterns in the literature that might be helpful for policy and practice at national, international and European level. Clearly, there are methodological limitations in a number of studies, and statements on policy and practice followed in different school settings that cannot be taken for granted.

According to the review, there is evidence to suggest that there is a link between inclusive education and social inclusion in the areas of education, employment and living in the community. At the same time, it identified other factors that promote or hinder social inclusion (e.g. quality of inclusive practice, social policy, social structures and attitudes, individual life course, etc.). The research evidence presented in this review suggests that attending segregated settings minimises the opportunities for social inclusion both in the short term (while children with disabilities are at school) and the long term (after graduation from secondary education). Attending a special setting is correlated with poor academic and vocational qualifications, employment in sheltered workshops, financial dependence, fewer opportunities to live independently, and poor social networks after graduation. In this context, policy-makers could consider how to re-design the specialist provision that is available in many countries in order to support learning in inclusive education settings.

The following are the review's main findings:

Education

Research indicates that:

- Inclusive education increases the opportunities for peer interactions and for close friendships between learners with and without disabilities.

- For social interactions and friendships to take place in inclusive settings, due consideration needs to be given to several elements that promote learners' participation (i.e. access, collaboration, recognition and acceptance).

- Learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may perform academically and socially better than learners educated in segregated settings.

- Attending and receiving support within inclusive education settings increases the likelihood of enrolling in higher education.

Employment

Research indicates that:

- Attending an inclusive education setting is one of the factors that increase the likelihood of people with disabilities being employed.

- The nature of the curriculum can either limit or increase opportunities for young people with disabilities to be employed.

- High-quality transition programmes provided in secondary school may increase the likelihood of people with disabilities being employed.

- Being educated in an inclusive education setting can influence the type of employment (e.g. supported employment, open employment and self-employment) of people with disabilities.

Living in the community

Research indicates that:

- Education and social welfare policies are two interlinked factors in achieving independent living.

- Youngsters with disabilities attending inclusive education settings are more likely to be financially independent shortly after graduating from secondary education.

- Youngsters with disabilities attending segregated settings are less likely to have friendships and social networks in their adult life.

- Being educated in an inclusive setting is one of the factors that increase the opportunities for participation in leisure activities, while being educated in a segregated setting acts as a barrier to participation.

This review provides policy-makers and other stakeholders with research evidence on the positive impact of inclusive education on social inclusion. In light of this, policy-makers could consider:

- how policy could best support the transitions from one system to another, and from one life period to another in order to maintain or increase opportunities for social inclusion;

- how policy can support and prolong the positive impact of inclusive education after formal education ends;

- how to re-design any separate specialist provision that may exist in countries in order to support learning in inclusive education settings.

INTRODUCTION

Within research exploring either inclusive education or social inclusion, literature frequently highlights the link between these two concepts and processes as an important issue.

In particular, there is a wide range of research in the area of inclusive education, examining the ideology of inclusive education (e.g. Barton, 2003; Slee, 2006; Allan, 2014), pedagogy for inclusive education (e.g. Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), school improvement for inclusive education (e.g. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004), and so on. There is also research examining social inclusion in the areas of transition from education to employment (e.g. Wehman, 2013), independent living (e.g. Duggan and Linehan, 2013), participation in self-advocacy groups, etc. Research examining the link between inclusive education and social inclusion also exists, although it is limited. This research is often conducted in disciplines other than inclusive education, such as sociology and psychology. This prevents inclusive education stakeholders from being informed about and using research evidence for the benefit of people with disabilities.

Therefore, this literature review aims to examine the link between inclusive education and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. In particular, two research questions guided the work:

- What is the link between inclusive education and social inclusion?
- What does current research say about inclusive education's potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion?

What this project brings to the literature on inclusive education is a structured approach to examine a significant number of studies on the topic. This review focused on three areas – education, employment and living in the community – and sought to provide evidence from a dataset of studies to explain how inclusive education is positively linked with social inclusion. By doing so, it sheds light on different aspects of the short-term and long-term social inclusion of people with disabilities in all three areas. Thus, its main findings stem from a synthesis of research evidence from numerous studies.

This project is expected to be useful to different education stakeholders and at different levels. In particular, a literature review demonstrating the evidence of inclusive education's impact on social inclusion may be useful for policy-makers who wish to develop evidence-based policies in relation to inclusive education. At another level, this review is expected to contribute to the theory of inclusive education. It will do so by providing evidence that the link between inclusive education and social inclusion is relevant to the quality of inclusive education provision, transition structures and social policy (e.g. policies to support employment of people with disabilities, independent living policies, policies for accessibility in the built environment). This review also provides evidence to suggest further areas of research (especially in European countries).

Given that this report covers different life periods, it is important to clarify the terms used. To begin with, the term 'learner(s)' refers to children enrolled in the education system. The term 'child/children' is used to refer to life experiences taking place outside school, and when it is important to highlight the difference between the lives of children and adults. Similarly, the term 'adult(s)' is used to compare and contrast with children's experiences. Finally, the term 'people with disabilities' is used generally to refer to both children and adults with disabilities.

The report is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 sets up the framework of the literature review; it clarifies the concepts of inclusive education and social inclusion and discusses whether the literature and European initiatives address the link between them. Chapter 2 provides information about the review's methodology. Chapters 3–5 make a synthesis of the research evidence in relation to inclusive education's impact on the social inclusion of people with disabilities in the following areas: education (Chapter 3), employment (Chapter 4) and living in the community (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 presents the review's key messages and considers the implications for policy and practice.

1. SETTING UP THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REVIEW

This chapter sets up the framework of the review. It maps the key issues related to the concepts of inclusive education and social inclusion. It examines the extent to which the link between inclusive education and social inclusion is addressed in the literature and within EU organisations/networks.

1.1. Inclusive education and social inclusion: conceptualising the terms

This section provides an overview of how the concepts of inclusive education and social inclusion are presented in academic literature and in reports prepared by organisations/networks, such as the United Nations (UN), the EU and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency).

1.1.1. Inclusive education

Over the last three decades, a substantial body of literature has recorded the dimensions that are linked to the concept of inclusive education. In this context, several definitions have been developed by individuals (i.e. theorists and researchers) and organisations (e.g. UN, European Commission and consulting agencies/networks). This section provides a brief review of the definitions around inclusive education, in an attempt to highlight how it is understood.

In the literature, inclusive education is primarily understood as an ideology and an approach to practice that respects the right of all children to receive quality education alongside their peers (Barton, 1997; Allan, 2007). According to Booth, inclusive education is linked with three perspectives, focusing on individuals, systems and values:

It involves reducing all forms of exclusion and increasing participation for all; the creation of systems and settings that are responsive to diversity in ways that value everyone equally and most importantly putting particular values into action in education and society. It is, fundamentally, a moral and political project. […] *I see inclusive values as concerned with equity, compassion and respect for diversity, human rights, participation, community, joy, honesty and sustainability* (2009, p. 127).

Inclusive education is increasingly understood as a right that entails a series of actions in order to be fulfilled. In a recent study submitted to the European Parliament, Soriano, Watkins and Ebersold argue that inclusive education, as the right of all learners to high-quality education, entails four dimensions:

- *Inclusive education as placement in mainstream education*

- *Inclusive education as a process towards equal learning opportunities*

- *Inclusive education towards equal achievement opportunities*

- *Inclusive education towards equal citizenship opportunities* (2017, pp. 8–9).

Göransson and Nilholm (2014) argue that research on inclusive education is based on four different (rather than complementary) understandings of inclusive education:

- Inclusion as the placement of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms

- Inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of learners with disabilities

- Inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all learners

- Inclusion as the creation of communities.

Thus, despite the extensive literature on the topic, inclusive education remains a contested concept as it is understood in different ways, according to the individual researchers' theoretical background and the national context (Meijer and Watkins, 2016). Some researchers argue that only the language has changed, but traditional exclusionary and discriminatory approaches are still in place, although they are termed inclusive (Slee, 2003; Allan, 2006).

The UN views inclusive education as a right for all learners, including learners with disabilities. Both the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006) clearly refer to the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. Article 24 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* states the right to inclusive education. It is further explained in the recent *General comment No. 4* (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). In particular, the *General comment* claims that inclusive education is to be

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understood as a human right, a principle that values all learners' well-being, a means for realising other human rights and a process for eliminating barriers:

a) *A fundamental human right of all learners. Notably, education is the right of the individual learner and not, in the case of children, the right of a parent or caregiver. Parental responsibilities in this regard are subordinate to the rights of the child;*

b) *A principle that values the well-being of all students, respects their inherent dignity and autonomy, and acknowledges individuals' requirements and their ability to effectively be included in and contribute to society;*

c) *A means of realizing other human rights. It is the primary means by which persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty, obtain the means to participate fully in their communities and be safeguarded from exploitation. It is also the primary means of achieving inclusive societies;*

d) *The result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminating barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students* (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, pp. 3–4).

The UN *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2015) also calls for countries to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals). The global education community has adopted the Education 2030 Framework for Action to further pursue the goals of inclusive and equitable quality education (UNESCO, 2015).

In the European context, inclusive education is also conceptualised as the human right to receive quality education in non-exclusionary settings. Furthermore, it is viewed as an important goal to be achieved through a process that will entail changes in the policy and practice of the countries concerned (refer to Watkins and Meijer, 2016).

In a recent report on fighting segregation through inclusive education, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) adopts the following definition of inclusive education:

A process that addresses and responds to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education (UNESCO's *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, 2009, in Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017, p. 5).

The report considers that ensuring inclusive education is linked to the principles of anti-discrimination, desegregation and quality education. In particular, it suggests that inclusive education is a process that entails:

- adopting comprehensive legal prohibition of discrimination in education;
- implementing school desegregation strategies;
- raising awareness of inclusive education;

- ensuring quality education in all schools;

- planning educational provision with an inclusive lens;

- regulating and monitoring school admissions;

- prohibiting testing as a selection tool;

- ensuring early assessment of children's needs;

- balancing the distribution of learners from vulnerable groups;

- defining socially balanced school districts;

- allocating the best teachers to the most challenging schools;

- promoting parental participation in the school (Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017).

The Agency aims to improve policy and practice for learners with disabilities across Europe following international and European key priorities (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2007). It highlights the principles of desegregation and quality education in inclusive education.

The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (European Agency, 2015a, p. 1).

According to the Agency:

… the operational principles guiding the implementation of structures and procedures within inclusive education systems must be those of equity, effectiveness, efficiency and raising achievements for all stakeholders – learners, their parents and families, educational professionals, community representatives and decision-makers – through high-quality, accessible educational opportunities (European Agency, 2015a, p. 2).

To sum up, even though there is no one agreed definition of inclusive education (Soriano, Watkins and Ebersold, 2017), the existing definitions increasingly view inclusive education as a human rights issue. At the same time, they draw links between inclusive education and placement in a mainstream school, high-quality education, anti-discrimination and desegregation.

1.1.2. Social inclusion

The literature on social inclusion is extensive. It covers vulnerable groups in general, and people with disabilities in particular. This section provides a brief review of the definitions around social inclusion and discusses how this concept is related to people with disabilities.

According to Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek and Leahy (2015), different terms are often used interchangeably with social inclusion (e.g. employment, independent living, friendships, etc.). The authors argue that social inclusion is a broad term which includes social interaction and community participation. In particular, social interaction refers to the kinds of people in the social network, including family members, staff, friends, acquaintances and intimate partners (either with or without a disability). Community participation is about

leisure activities, such as hobbies, arts and sports; political and civic activities or organisations; productive activities, like employment or education; consumption, or access to goods and services; and religious and cultural activities and groups.

Several researchers argue that social inclusion is a process to participate in the different levels of social life, and depends upon a set of variables. For example, Simplican et al. propose the 'ecological approach to social inclusion', which captures 'how individual, interpersonal, organizational, community and socio-political variables influence interpersonal relationships and community participation' (2015, p. 25). The following are some examples of the variables that each level includes:

- Individual variables: age, gender, self-motivation, sense of belonging, etc.

- Interpersonal variables: relationships with staff, family members, friends, attitudes of social network members, etc.

- Organisational variables: organisational cultures of groups within the community such as schools and employment centres, etc.

- Community variables: availability of and access to services, type of living accommodation, etc.

- Socio-political variables: laws, legal enforcement, legislative cutbacks, etc.

Similarly, Pallisera, Vilà and Fullana view social inclusion as a process to participate in the different social spheres. They indicate that high-quality social services are important in this process:

Social inclusion is a process that should ensure all members of society, whatever their personal characteristics, participate equally in the different social spheres: the political, economic, work, cultural, etc. Active social inclusion therefore presupposes fighting against poverty, promoting the participation of all members of society in the labour market and their access to high-quality social services (health, housing, education, justice) (2012, p. 1115).

In relation to social inclusion and people with disabilities, Cobigo, Ouelette-Kuntz, Lysaght and Martin (2012) argue that social inclusion must be defined from a developmental perspective (i.e. when a person's social inclusion improves through opportunities for interaction and participation). They also argue that social inclusion occurs when opportunities for contributing to society are meaningful for the person with disabilities and the community, as well as having realistic goals. In this context, their suggested definition of social inclusion is:

(1) a series of complex interactions between environmental factors and personal characteristics that provide opportunities to (2) access public goods and services, (3) experience valued and expected social roles of one's choosing based on his/her age, gender and culture, (4) be recognized as a competent individual and trusted to perform social roles in the community, and (5) belonging to a social network within which one receives and contributes support (p. 82).

International and European organisations/networks increasingly mention the social inclusion of vulnerable groups as a goal, and provide definitions highlighting different aspects.

At international level, the UN understands social inclusion as the process of combating poverty and social exclusion. A study on measuring social inclusion provides the following definition:

… social inclusion, seen here as the process by which societies combat poverty and social exclusion. […] *"Social exclusion" is defined here as the involuntary exclusion of individuals and groups from society's political, economic and societal processes, which prevents their full participation in the society in which they live. "Poverty" is defined as the lack of economic resources, and so defined, is an important cause of social exclusion in as much as the lack of those resources prevents participation* (UN, 2010, p. 1).

The list of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals suggests that social inclusion is indeed conceptualised as a process of combating poverty and social exclusion (UN, 2015). Some examples of the sustainable development goals are:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (UN, 2015, p. 14).

The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006), relies, among others, on the principles of 'non-discrimination' and 'full and effective participation in the society'. A number of articles in the Convention highlight social inclusion for people with disabilities on the basis of these principles. For example:

Article 9 – Accessibility; Article 12 – Equal recognition before the law; Article 13 – Access to justice; Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community; Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information; Article 23 – Respect for home and the family; Article 24 – Education; Article 27 – Work and employment; Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection; Article 29 – Participation in political and public life; Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

At European level, social inclusion is frequently discussed alongside measures to minimise social exclusion and combat discrimination. According to the Council of the European Union:

Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights (2003, p. 8).

The *Treaty of Lisbon* (EU, 2007), which amended the two previous EU treaties, highlighted Europe's mission to promote social inclusion, particularly for minority/vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities:

Article 1a: The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail (p. C 306/11).

Article 2: [...] It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child [...] (p. C 306/11).

Article 5b: In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (p. C 306/49).

To sum up, this section presented the different aspects of social inclusion, as they are presented in the literature (e.g. individual characteristics, relationships and social networks, participation in organised structures such as schools and employment, living in the community, etc.). It also showed that international and European networks/organisations, such as the UN and the EU, discuss social inclusion in terms of combating poverty and minimising the social exclusion of vulnerable groups. Influential reports and conventions present inclusive education as a component of social inclusion, alongside other equally important components (e.g. being employed, living independently, participating in cultural and leisure activities, etc.).

The following section examines whether the literature addresses the relationship between inclusive education and social inclusion for people with disabilities, such as inclusive education's impact on short-term and long-term social inclusion.

1.2. To what extent does the literature address the link between inclusive education and social inclusion?

Social inclusion is believed to be one of the positive outcomes of inclusive education (Misson, 2008; Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl and Petry, 2011; Soresi, Nota and Wehmeyer, 2011; MacArthur, 2013). It is expected to take place during children's school years (short-term social inclusion through participation in school and out-of-school activities) and also when they finish school and begin to lead their adult lives (long-term social inclusion through being employed, having a social life, etc.). This section examines the role of research in addressing the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. It goes on to explore how the EU and its consulting networks/organisations are concerned with the link between inclusive education and social inclusion.

1.2.1. The role of research in addressing the link between inclusive education and social inclusion

To begin with, the literature frequently states inclusive education's potential to promote short-term social inclusion and set the basis for long-term social inclusion. For example, Misson argues:

Schools and, as children get older, other education and training providers, have great potential in promoting social inclusion. This means not only providing excellent educational outcomes, but also acting as hubs where children and young people come into contact with the wider community, a broader range of supports, and begin to develop their pathways into the world of work (2008, p. 10).

Researchers have, at times, focused on identifying different dimensions related to the social inclusion of learners with disabilities. Their approaches varied according to their background (e.g. education, psychology, etc.) and their focus (e.g. the child as an individual with an impairment, the school context). MacArthur (2013) explains that one research approach was to target the 'social skills' of learners with disabilities. This line of research tended to record poor social skills for certain impairment groups and proposed intervention programmes for their inclusion.

Another line of research sought to examine how schools can become places that provide opportunities for learners to form interpersonal relationships, participate in everyday activities and develop a sense of belonging in the class and school community. In this context, the principle of 'participation' gained ground as one of the prerequisites for social inclusion in inclusive education settings (MacArthur, 2013; Schneider, 2015):

'Participation' is well established in the inclusive education literature as a key principle that involves being with and collaborating with others; being actively engaged and involved in making decisions; and accepting people for who they are by recognizing and valuing a variety of identities (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006 in MacArthur, 2013, p. 796).

Researchers note that a clear definition of social inclusion in relation to education is not currently available (Koster, Nakken, Pijl and van Houten, 2009; Bossaert et al., 2011). At the same time, analyses of relevant studies concluded that the literature uses the terms 'social inclusion', 'social integration' and 'social participation' interchangeably to refer to the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. Therefore, there are different definitions emphasising different aspects of social inclusion, such as social acceptance, peer acceptance, mutual friendships, social skills, self-perception of peer acceptance, etc. (Koster et al., 2009; Bossaert et al., 2011).

Koster et al. (2009) note that social inclusion is achieved when learners go through a set of experiences that show that they feel good about themselves and are active participants in the class and school community. Social inclusion is hindered through exclusionary practices that are a source of distress. Based on their analysis of 62 articles, they conclude that there are four areas related to social inclusion and social exclusion, each one entailing specific feelings or practices:

- *Friendships/relationships: friendship network, mutual friendship*

- *Contacts/interactions: playing together, working together on tasks, participation in group activities, (un)acknowledged limitations, social isolation*

- *Perception of pupil with special educational needs: self-perception of peer acceptance, satisfaction at school, social self-concept, self-perception of social competence, loneliness*

- *Acceptance by classmates: social preference, social support (behaviours), bullying, social rejection (Koster et al., 2009, p. 134).*

Bossaert et al. (2011) relied on the study by Koster et al. (2009), and sought to examine how social inclusion is understood in 19 studies focusing on secondary education. They also concluded that social inclusion is about the four areas identified by Koster et al. (2009). Moreover, they added that:

Although the subthemes within the key themes largely concurred, one subtheme (i.e. self-perception of social interaction) was added and three subthemes, mentioned in the scheme based on preschool and primary school, were not found (2011, p. 60).

The three subthemes are (un)acknowledged limitations, social self-concept and self-perception of social competence.

It is increasingly argued that it is important to demonstrate that learners benefit from inclusive practices. This is in order to convince practitioners and policy-makers that inclusive education is not only an ethical issue, but is also more effective than standard educational practices (Dyson, 2014). Florian and Spratt (2013) suggest that providing evidence for inclusive education is a matter of ensuring that inclusive pedagogical approaches are in place. They propose a framework of inclusive assumptions and evidence of inclusive practice. However, Florian (2014) notes that, over the years, researchers examined inclusive education from other perspectives: person-centred approaches that operate at the individual level; school improvement approaches that minimise individual differences and operate at school level; and special education approaches that emphasise the relocation of special education practices in mainstream classrooms. Regardless of their differing foci on inclusive education, scholars in the field tend to agree that inclusive education is recognised as a set of principles that need to be in place in societies that are concerned with rights and equity. However, at the same time, it is a set of practices the effects of which can be evaluated (Göransson and Nilholm, 2014; Dyson, 2014; Florian, 2014).

Arguably, research on the impact of inclusive education on social inclusion exists, but is limited (Ryndak, Alper, Hughes and McDonnell, 2012). In addition, such research is not always longitudinal (following the participants at different periods of their lives) and it often has methodological limitations. The main body of research concerned with the social inclusion of people with disabilities has mainly taken two strands: children's social inclusion while they are in school settings, and the social inclusion of adults with disabilities after they graduate. In relation to the first strand, research evidence suggests that social inclusion might be achieved at school level when inclusive practices are in place (Ryndak al., 2012). In relation to the second strand, there is a great body of research describing the extent to which adults with disabilities are employed, live independently, participate in

leisure activities, and so on. However, it does not examine the impact of the type of education they received.

The next section further builds the framework of the review by presenting how the EU and other European organisations and networks have addressed the link between inclusive education and social inclusion.

1.2.2. How the European Union and European organisations and networks have addressed the link between inclusive education and social inclusion

In the last three decades, the EU has shown increasing interest in the educational and social inclusion of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.

To begin with, it signed the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2007, and it developed the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020* that builds upon the Convention (European Commission, 2017a). The *European Disability Strategy* focuses on eight priority areas: accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health, and external action (European Commission, 2010). It is important to note that under the 'education and training' priority area, inclusive education is clearly stated as a goal for learners with disabilities. All the other priority areas, except 'health' and 'external action', refer to different dimensions of social inclusion, such as accessibility of goods and services, participation in public life and leisure activities, combating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities, increasing employment in the open labour market, decent living conditions, etc. Although the *European Disability Strategy* does not clearly draw the link between inclusive education and social inclusion, it could be argued that all priority areas are understood as a group of principles that must co-exist in order to achieve both inclusive education and social inclusion.

The Agency, funded by European member countries and the European Commission, has repeatedly highlighted inclusive education's potential to have an impact on social inclusion. To begin with, the Agency maintains that inclusive education systems can have an impact on social inclusion:

A move to an inclusive system requires the identification and removal of barriers that prevent all learners being present in mainstream settings and participating fully in learning opportunities that allow them to achieve (not only in academic subjects, but also in wider terms that impact on social inclusion) (European Agency, 2015b, p. 5).

A number of Agency projects and reports on inclusive education pinpoint the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. Several past projects are concerned with the relationship between education and employment. For example, the Transition from School to Employment project (European Agency, 2002), completed about 16 years ago, mapped the main barriers and available options for young people with disabilities in Europe. In this project, employment was understood as one form of social inclusion, alongside housing, leisure and so on, that is dependent upon the quality of education. Therefore, it raised the role of schools in better equipping learners with disabilities for employment. In addition, it highlighted schools' role in planning for the transition from school to employment. The Vocational Education and Training project further highlighted the role of education in

improving VET in order to increase employment opportunities for young people with disabilities (European Agency, 2013).

Recently, more Agency projects have addressed the link between inclusive education and short-term or long-term social inclusion. For example, the Country Policy Review and Analysis project identified, among other issues, 'prevention' policy measures aiming to promote inclusive education and prevent long-term social exclusion (European Agency, 2016a, p. 20). One of the recommendations for inclusive education policy concerns short-term social inclusion, since it requires both academic and social achievements: 'The school ethos and culture is guided by school strategic plans that have high expectations for the academic and social achievements of all learners' (2016a, p. 31). The Financing of Inclusive Education project also referred to the link between academic and social outcomes, and the right to education and social participation. It asked: 'Does financing of inclusive education support the right to education and social participation?' (European Agency, 2016b, p. 15). The Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education literature review also focused on the pedagogical strategies that are effective in raising the academic and social achievement of all learners (European Agency, 2016c). The Inclusive Early Childhood Education project recognised social and emotional development as one of the key dimensions in children's development. The project literature review discussed the social dimensions of inclusion and exclusion in early childhood education (European Agency, 2017). The Early School Leaving literature review raised the issue of early school leaving as a pathway to social exclusion and explained how it is linked with wider educational and social marginalisation (European Agency, 2016d).

In a recent report, the Agency presented the opinions of young people with and without disabilities about how schools and communities could ensure inclusive education. One of their messages was 'being fully included in society' through inclusive education:

- *It is essential to be included in mainstream schools, in order to be included in society.*

- *The aim is that all are able to find their place in society.*

The young people considered that all learners need to learn together in order to live together. They stated that this is the first step in the process towards social inclusion. The younger learners are when they get together, the better for learning about mutual tolerance and respecting differences. They learn from an early age to communicate, to welcome and share different experiences and to recognise strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses. They learn at school to be considered for what they can do and not for their disability or how they look. This entails not only their inclusion in educational programmes, but also their involvement in all leisure activities. The young people indicated that learning together in school will enable them to find their place and be included in society (European Agency, 2016e, p. 19).

The Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) is concerned with social inclusion policies for people with disabilities in European countries. It supports policy development in collaboration with the European Commission's Disability Unit (ANED, 2017). In a report on EU social inclusion and social protection strategies, ANED (2009)

presents a synthesis of social inclusion policies in European countries in the areas of education, independent living, long-term care, and decision-making. The report concludes that European countries have made progress in developing social policies to enhance the social inclusion of people with disabilities. However, it acknowledges that there is more to be done to comply with EU policy. The report concludes that the impact of those policies on the lives of people with disabilities cannot be identified due to a lack of statistical data.

Some of the thematic areas on which European countries have produced national reports for ANED over the years include: accessibility, education/training, employment, independent living, and social protection. The synthesis report on education/training includes a section that addresses inclusive education's contribution to the social inclusion of people with disabilities:

Developing an inclusive education system is not only a matter of right. Access to education offers a key means to put persons with disabilities on an equal footing with non-disabled persons, to promote diversity within schools and to create social bonds between persons with and without disabilities (ANED, 2011, p. 18).

The report goes on to highlight the following issues raised in the literature to demonstrate the positive impact of inclusive education on social inclusion (ANED, 2011, p. 18):

- Access to education increases individuals' ability to be included in society.

- Learners with disabilities enrolled in mainstream education have better academic results than learners schooled in special classes, and may have better chances of being employed.

- Young adults with disabilities accessing mainstream education have better community participation and closer personal relationships than those without such access.

- Those who complete upper-secondary education are more likely to gain a satisfactory level of residential independence, to gain parental status and to be engaged in community activities that can provide opportunities to meet people with similar interests, to develop new skills, to experience the satisfaction of shared accomplishments and to contribute to the community.

- Learners who are schooled in a mainstream class have better chances of transiting to tertiary education than those who are not.

The Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE), which advises and supports the European Commission, has produced a number of reports that draw the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. This link is often addressed indirectly and it refers to all vulnerable groups. For example, the report on European education systems and training focuses on the need to improve the quality of education for all learners in order to increase employment opportunities and achieve social cohesion (NESSE and EENEE, 2008). A report focusing on education, training and employment for learners with disabilities (NESSE, 2012) makes a more explicit link between inclusive education and social inclusion. It indicates that the short-term social inclusion of learners with disabilities in European countries is sometimes poor as a result of non-inclusive practices. It refers to

the barriers to long-term social inclusion (e.g. barriers to employment due to lack of qualifications and lack of employment support programmes, etc.).

In sum, the EU and organisations/networks supported by it have raised the issue of inclusive education and social inclusion, although they have not explored the link between them to a great extent.

The following section provides a conclusion to the chapter. It explains why the areas of education, employment and living in the community were identified as critical in understanding social inclusion, and guided the literature review's methodology.

1.3. Conclusion

Given the information provided in this chapter, the areas of education, employment and living in the community were identified as critical for understanding social inclusion.

First, this chapter argued that inclusive education is understood as the provision of high-quality education in schools that value the rights, equality, access and participation of all learners. Access to and participation in education are central in the background literature and in other reports that consider them important for social inclusion in the community (e.g. the UN Conventions, UNESCO's *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, Agency projects). Therefore, education was identified as one area of interest for this review.

Second, this chapter repeatedly addressed the link between social inclusion and employment. This link is raised both in the background literature and in European and international reports that define social inclusion as combating poverty and social exclusion from the open labour market (e.g. the UN Conventions, the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, Agency projects, relevant reports from ANED, NESSE and EENEE). This makes employment another area of interest for this review.

Third, this chapter explained that social inclusion is mainly about social interaction and community participation. Based on the definitions of social inclusion presented in this chapter, living in the community emerges as an important prerequisite for social inclusion. It is inherent in all variables that constitute social inclusion, most noticeably in individual, interpersonal and community variables (refer to Simplican et al., 2015 in section 1.1.2.). It is an important component of many articles of the UN Conventions and of ANED's work.

In light of the above, this project is concerned with both the short-term and long-term social inclusion of people with disabilities. Short-term social inclusion refers to the period when children attend school. It entails, for example, social interaction with their peers and teachers, and enrolment in extra-curricular activities and out-of-school social events and gatherings. Long-term social inclusion refers to the period when people with disabilities finish compulsory schooling. It entails, for example, social interaction with friends, participation in paid employment, enrolment in higher education, independent living, and so on.

The following chapter outlines the literature review's methodology.

2. METHODOLOGY

Given that this is a literature review, the methodology describes the process of forming a dataset of peer-reviewed papers.

The search of the literature collected peer-reviewed papers in English from different countries, which:

- are relevant to the link between inclusive education and social inclusion, with a focus on children/adults with disabilities;

- provide research evidence covering all or part of the learner life period (i.e. while they are in early childhood, primary, secondary and/or higher education settings);

- provide research evidence covering the period after graduation (i.e. education, employment and living in the community).

It is important to note that all the papers in the database were evaluated as regards their use of the term 'inclusive education', as in a number of cases, they referred to educational approaches that could not be characterised as inclusive. Those papers were used with caution, and they were sometimes useful to understand the differences in the findings of various studies.

Papers in the following two categories were excluded from the database:

- Papers reporting research focusing on the social inclusion of learners with disabilities educated fully in segregated settings

- Papers focusing on the social inclusion of children/adults with disabilities without considering the educational context.

The peer-reviewed papers were collected initially through searches in databases (mainly Scopus and EBSCOhost) using keywords. Given that different authors use different terms, the following sets of keywords were used in combination as follows:

- Social inclusion, social participation, social integration

- Disability, disabled people, people with disabilities, special educational needs, special needs

- Education, compulsory education, early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, higher education, employment, community living, independent living, financial independence.

The aforementioned keywords link to the three areas that are the focus of this literature review (i.e. education, employment and living in the community).

After reading the first set of peer-reviewed papers, a snowballing approach was followed (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This entailed finding relevant papers from the lists of references in the first set of peer-reviewed papers. In this phase, more searches in databases were conducted to collect papers by authors whose work was found most relevant to the review, and more papers for some of the newly identified project thematic areas.

The complete dataset includes over 200 papers. Most of them report on studies from 1990 onwards that followed different methodologies (e.g. longitudinal, case study, survey, correlational, comparative, meta-analysis, literature review, etc.) and methods (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observations, etc.). The studies were conducted in a range of countries, mainly in Europe (e.g. Italy, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, etc.), the USA and Australia. All documents were read and coded for their references on inclusive education and social inclusion. Three thematic areas were identified: education, employment and living in the community.

This review does not intend to report exhaustively all the research evidence collected; rather it aims to highlight patterns in the literature that might be helpful for policy and practice (also refer to European Agency, 2016d). Clearly, there are methodological limitations in a number of studies (refer to Ryndak et al., 2012). Moreover, study outcomes may not be directly comparable due to different policies and practices or different definitions (e.g. the contested use of the term 'inclusive education' mentioned earlier). It is also acknowledged that, at times, research from certain countries may be more prominent in the review[1]. However, the review is an attempt to map research evidence on the link between inclusive education and social inclusion and underline the complexities around it.

The following three chapters present the review's findings in the areas of education, employment and living in the community.

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[1] For example, research on the link between inclusive education and employment/financial independence is mostly from Norway.

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3. EDUCATION

This chapter draws upon peer-reviewed papers addressing the link between inclusive education and social inclusion in compulsory education and in higher education. The review identified more peer-reviewed papers examining the link between compulsory education and social inclusion, than those examining the link between inclusive education, higher education and social inclusion.

3.1. Compulsory education

Compulsory education constitutes a significant part of the lives of children and young adults with disabilities. In many European countries, compulsory education is addressed to children and young adults aged from 5 or 6 years old up to the age of 16 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016). This section mainly examines the link between inclusive education and the social inclusion of children during their school life. It examines two dimensions: friendships and peer interactions (and the link with the concept of participation), and academic and social achievement.

3.1.1. The link between inclusive education and friendships/peer interactions

A significant body of the literature sheds light on the link between inclusive education and social inclusion through friendships and peer relationships while children with disabilities are still in school. Friendship is understood as 'a relationship based on two people's genuine encounters and interactions' (Saarinen, Jahnukainen and Pirttimaa, 2016, p. 302). Friendships evolve within communities (school, workplace, leisure activities), usually, but not always, between people of the same age and gender, and they are characterised by intimacy, togetherness, trust and mutuality (ibid.). Apart from close friendships, adolescents also have wider networks of peers in which interactions are less frequent and

less intimate (Giordano, 2003). Both close friendships and peer interactions in wider social networks of peers are of interest in this section.

In their review of research from the late 1980s up to early 2000, Katz and Mirenda (2002) summarise the research trends on the social benefits of inclusive education, which include the development of friendships and peer interactions. Their review suggests that early research sought to examine the social rather than the academic efficacy of inclusive education, and the beliefs (of teachers, experts and learners) about the social outcomes of inclusive education. In the 1990s, researchers turned their focus to opportunities for social interaction, the impact of social interactions on the development of social skills, behavioural outcomes, development of friendships, and the social benefits for learners without disabilities. Today, there is a significant body of research on the impact that social interactions have on the development of friendships between children with and without disabilities in inclusive settings. However, it is acknowledged that social relationships are complex and difficult to measure.

Assessing and promoting the quality of social relationships among a highly diverse group of children is a complicated task, and measurement of social outcomes is correspondingly complex. [...] *Indeed, the complexity of what constitutes friendship and a general sense of belonging adds a dimension of uncertainty when evaluating current research for this goal* (Guralnick and Bruder, 2016, p. 170).

In relation to friendships and peer interactions in compulsory education, research evidence shows that social interactions taking place in inclusive settings are a prerequisite for the development of friendships and other social skills/behaviours.

Qualitative studies, mostly case studies, provide in-depth information about the multi-faceted social impact of inclusive education. Inclusive education provides space where social interactions can take place, leading to the development of friendships, social and communication skills, support networks, a sense of belonging, and positive behavioural outcomes (Katz and Mirenda, 2002; Guralnick and Bruder, 2016).

Inclusive classrooms appear to maximize the opportunity for students with developmental disabilities to meet and form friendships with students without disabilities by increasing the opportunities for them to interact (Alper and Ryndak, 1992), developing their social skills (Evans et al., 1992), making mutually reinforcing events accessible (Haring and Breen, 1992), and arranging for activities that require cooperation (Fryxell and Kennedy, 1995; Janney and Snell, 1996; Strain, Odom, and McConnell, 1984) (Katz and Mirenda, 2002, p. 30).

Research findings suggest that the link between inclusive education and social interactions with peers begins from early childhood education. In particular, inclusive early childhood education settings encourage the development of positive peer relationships between children with and without disabilities, although the peer-related competences of children with disabilities may remain unaffected (Guralnick, 1999; 2010; Guralnick, Connor, Hammond, Gottman and Kinnish, 1996). Furthermore, inclusive education in early childhood is positively associated with developing a 'degree of belongingness' which means that children with disabilities establish 'expectations about social relationships of all forms that will last beyond the early childhood years' (Guralnick and Bruder, 2016, p. 174).

Finally, peer relationships in inclusive settings may benefit children with disabilities in other areas, such as improving their linguistic efficacy and observational learning (Guralnick and Bruder, 2016).

Some quantitative studies identify the positive effects of inclusive education on social interactions among peers, but report that developing close friendships is often more demanding (Buysse, Goldman and Skinner, 2002; Odom, Zercher, Li, Marquart, Sandall and Brown, 2006; Meyer and Ostrosky, 2014; Guralnick and Bruder, 2016). Buysse et al. (2002), for example, found that learners with disabilities in inclusive settings were 1.73 times more likely to have at least one friend, compared to learners with disabilities enrolled in special programmes. However, as Meyer and Ostrosky (2014) note, there are significant limitations in studies examining the friendships of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings. For example, there is a lack of:

- information concerning the impact of interventions intended to promote friendships;

- data from learners with disabilities themselves;

- data documenting the extent to which friendships can facilitate the social inclusion of learners with disabilities among their classroom peers.

The research documents the link between inclusive education and friendships/social interactions. Nevertheless, researchers point out that the opposite can occur when schools are not guided by inclusive values and they follow exclusionary and discriminatory practices. They suggest that participation is a key concept in understanding the process of social inclusion.

According to Booth:

Participation in education involves going beyond access. It implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught, and having a say in how education is experienced. But participation also involves being recognized for oneself and being accepted for oneself. I participate with you, when you recognize me as a person like yourself, and accept me for who I am (2002, p. 2).

Taking Booth's understanding of participation further, the *Framework for Participation* developed by Florian, Rouse and Black-Hawkins (2011) views participation as the outcome of three factors: access (being there), collaboration (learning together) and diversity (recognition and acceptance). In particular:

- *Participation and access means joining and staying in the school; having access to spaces and places; to the curriculum; and to extra-curricular activities.*

- *Participation and collaboration refers to students learning alongside other students; supporting students to learn together; members of staff working together; staff and students learning together; schools and other institutions working together.*

- *Participation and diversity is about the recognition and acceptance of students, by staff; the recognition and acceptance of staff, by staff; the recognition and acceptance of students, by students; and the recognition and acceptance of staff, by students* (p. 66).

Therefore, achieving the social inclusion of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings is about increasing participation in all areas, among all stakeholders (i.e. staff, learners and parents) and at all levels (i.e. school policy and practice, school culture).

A number of studies examine the participation of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings and provide evidence to suggest that negative attitudes and exclusionary school structures towards disability often hinder participation. Qualitative studies conducted in Iceland document how the participation of learners with physical disabilities is sometimes hindered due to a confluence of factors that are not in line with inclusive education (Egilson and Traustadóttir, 2009; Egilson, 2014). For example, Egilson's (2014) longitudinal study, focusing on the experiences of seven young people with physical impairments within primary and secondary school, shows that the learners' participation was hindered by limited accessibility, flexibility, accommodation, respect and support from school. The learners involved in the study were not always engaging in all activities alongside their peers and were not actively consulted in the implementation of these activities. Egilson notes that inflexible systems and services complicated the learners' lives. Some learners found it easier not to attend specific educational or social activities (e.g. one learner mentioned he had to order transport for extra-curricular activities 24 hours in advance).

Researchers record examples of segregation in mainstream settings on the basis of impairment, such as exemption from subjects that are believed to be 'difficult' for learners with disabilities. For example, Murphy, Carbone and the Council on Children with Disabilities (2008) note that in a study conducted by the United States Department of Education in 2000, more than three quarters of schools allowed learners with cognitive and physical disabilities to be exempted from required physical education. Along the same lines, Gaffney (2014) provides evidence from a longitudinal ethnographic case study conducted in New Zealand. It demonstrates how the participation of a learner with disability was hindered because of the ways that the adults attempted to provide support, and the disabling features of school practices that tended to segregate on the basis of his impairment rather than include.

In putting together the findings of four qualitative research projects in New Zealand, MacArthur (2013) concludes that learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings often feel excluded, isolated, lonely, are bullied or have difficulties finding friends. This is because the socio-cultural context of schools and classrooms separates them from their peers without disabilities and poses barriers to their participation. In particular:

In highlighting the barriers to friendships, they [the learners with disabilities] *point to poor physical access to the spaces and activities that are culturally valued by children and young people at school, and to structures that remove them from the peer group they want to be part of, making them feel 'different' in negative ways. Ironically, when allowances are made for diversity, the approaches used can discriminate against them and undermine their participation. Overly close teacher aide support; ability grouping; and withdrawal for 'specialist' teaching and therapies are identified by disabled students as interfering with*

their participation alongside classmates. Students ask to be present in class alongside their classmates and friends; they want their teachers to understand the effects of their impairment and take these into consideration in their teaching; and they want to be valued and included as active participants in class, in the school grounds, and in extra-curricular activities (MacArthur, 2013, p. 807).

In this context, research examining the structural features of schooling alongside everyday social and cultural experiences is of interest. In McMaugh's (2011) study, the experiences of 24 young learners (about 12 years old) of social inclusion, peers and friends explain why being socially included is a complex process. According to the findings, about one third of learners were happy with their social life in school and had a 'best friend', whereas one third of learners had no friendships at all. However, 'most of the 24 children, regardless of the presence or absence of friends, experienced bullying and harassment related to their condition' (2011, pp. 857–858). The learners interviewed pointed out the impact of both the structural practices of schooling and the everyday cultural and individual beliefs of teachers and peers on their experiences. Davis and Watson (2001) have also recorded the impact of individual and cultural practices driven by prejudice on the social inclusion of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings. These findings support the position that all stakeholders involved (both children and adults) in schools 'also contribute to discrimination and exclusion through everyday cultural and individual practices' (Davis and Watson, 2001, p. 672; Naraian, 2008; McMaugh, 2011).

Therefore, for social interactions and friendships to take place in inclusive settings, due consideration needs to be given to a number of elements that promote participation (Ebersold, 2007). To name a few:

- the development and implementation of truly inclusive school policies and structures (MacArthur, 2013);

- the development of an inclusive school culture that promotes learning and understanding, rather than social comparison and competition (McDougall, DeWit, King, Miller and Killip, 2004);

- the education of teachers on inclusive pedagogy (Black-Hawkins, 2012; Black-Hawkins and Florian, 2012; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011; Mamas, 2012; Donnelly, Ó Murchú and Thies, 2016; INCLUD-ED, 2015) that may eventually lead to minimising/combating withdrawal from the mainstream class (Wendelborg and Tøssebro, 2010; 2011);

- the systematic mediation on behalf of teachers for peer stories to be expressed and understood (Naraian, 2008), and so on.

In this context, research highlighting that the type of learners' impairment may increase or limit social inclusion (e.g. Margalit, 1998) needs to be interpreted with caution. This is particularly because it rarely considers the level and quality of inclusive education policy and provision, and the personal experiences and voices of learners with disabilities.

3.1.2. The relationship between achievement and social inclusion

Although achievement in education is often associated with academic achievement, Florian et al. (2011) point out that achievement can be academic, social, emotional, creative,

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physical, and so on. This section focuses on academic and social achievement, and how they are related to social inclusion.

Florian et al. (2011) argue that in order to understand the relationship between inclusive education and achievement, practitioners must examine their own understandings of the two concepts. The authors provide a list of questions about achievement (e.g. 'What do you understand by educational achievement? – academic; social; emotional; creative; physical', p. 68) and inclusive education (e.g. 'Do you think it is more acceptable to include some children and young people rather than others in this school/class/group, etc.? If so, who would you include? And, who not? Why?', p. 69). Then, they propose questions to help the practitioners/researchers examine the relationship between inclusive education and achievement (e.g. 'What changes do you think could be made in this school to ensure high levels of achievement as well as high levels of inclusion so that all students can participate fully in education?', p. 69). The authors argue that there can be no clear-cut suggestions on how to improve inclusive education and achievement. However, through the process of discussing these issues, practitioners and researchers will gradually become aware of the complexities of both inclusive education and achievement, and think critically about the kind of data that is important to address this relationship.

Along these lines, it is argued that there is a dynamic relationship between academic and social inclusion that is the outcome of implementing inclusive pedagogies (Mamas, 2012). The systematic review by Sheehy, Rix, Collins, Hall, Nind and Wearmouth (2009) maintains that pedagogies promoting the academic and social inclusion of learners with disabilities need to have the following five characteristics:

- teachers who know how to teach the curriculum and why they use certain approaches;

- learners who are socially engaged in activities that promote social interaction;

- flexibility in the way activities are presented so that they are accessible to all learners;

- promoting learners' understanding through planned scaffolding of the content (both cognitive and social);

- use of authentic classroom activities that are valued by the pedagogic community.

The understanding of achievement as both academic and social led to studies aiming to draw the link between inclusive education and academic and social achievement. A meta-analysis conducted by Dyssegaard and Larsen (2013) examined the academic and social effects of inclusive education on learners with disabilities. According to their findings, learners attending inclusive education have better academic achievements, well-being and classmate relationships than learners attending special schools or special classes. However, the authors note that some of the findings of the studies included in the meta-analysis are contradictory or shed light on dimensions of inclusive education that need further consideration. One such issue is the finding that the youngest learners with disabilities thrive best, but as they grow older, they do not feel the same level of satisfaction in inclusive education settings.

Some of the pedagogical matters/approaches that were found to have a positive impact on learners' participation in class, academic achievement, self-esteem, confidence and classmate relationships are:

- clear objectives for learners' academic and social development;

- learner plans developed collaboratively by teachers, resource persons, parents and learners;

- learners' awareness of specific learning goals (Dyssegaard and Larsen, 2013).

In addition, the meta-analysis found that collaborative teaching between two teachers has a positive effect on learners' academic and social achievement, particularly when it is implemented in the primary school, and when both teachers assist all learners. In relation to the role of teaching assistants, the findings suggest that they can have a positive impact on learners' academic and social achievements when they are trained to work with small groups of learners in ways that address their needs without stigmatising them.

One recent meta-analysis by Oh-Young and Filler (2015) used the findings of 24 studies (1980–2013) examining the impact of inclusive education on academic and social achievement. Their findings suggest that the majority of learners with disabilities placed in more inclusive settings performed better academically and socially than learners educated in less inclusive settings. The researchers argue that their meta-analysis, in combination with the results of two other meta-analyses – Carlberg and Kavale (1980) and Wang and Baker (1985) –, provides 'evidence spanning over 80 years that reiterate and reinforce the notion that separate is not always equal' (Oh-Young and Filler, 2015, p. 90). Another meta-analysis, by Baker, Wang and Walberg, suggests that 'segregation of special students in separate classrooms is actually deleterious to their academic performance and social adjustment' (1994/95, p. 34).

Other review studies examine the link between inclusive education and academic and social inclusion by focusing on specific groups of learners with disabilities. For example, Freeman and Alkin (2000) reviewed 36 studies on the academic and social outcomes of learners with intellectual disabilities. The authors focused on quantitative and qualitative studies examining the impact of placement in mainstream or special education settings on academic achievement and social outcomes, rather than on the link between inclusive education settings and achievement. Their review suggests that learners with intellectual disabilities in mainstream classes were less socially accepted than their peers without intellectual disabilities. However, learners with intellectual disabilities in mainstream settings performed better in academic achievement and social competence than learners with intellectual disabilities in segregated settings.

The following section takes the issue of achievement in compulsory education further, and draws the link between inclusive education and higher education.

3.2. Higher education

Higher education is any kind of education beyond the secondary level leading to a formal degree. One of the EU's priorities is to increase participation in higher education, particularly by groups that are under-represented (European Commission, 2017b). People with disabilities are an under-represented group, and it is increasingly argued that inclusive education settings 'may ease the path' to higher education (Cobb, Lipscomb, Wolgemuth, Schulte, Veliquette, Alwell, Batchelder, Bernard, Hernandez, Holmquist-Johnson, Orsi, Sample McMeeking, Wang and Weinberg, 2013, p. ix).

A longitudinal study conducted in the USA records evidence of the impact of inclusive education on the enrolment of learners with disabilities in higher education. Based on data analysis, the study presents a transition model that explains the impact of inclusive education on higher education enrolment (Flexer, Daviso, Baer, McMahan Queen and Meindl, 2011; Baer, Daviso, Flexer, McMahan Queen and Meindl, 2011). According to the findings, inclusion in a mainstream class for more than 80% of the time substantially increased the likelihood of full-time enrolment in higher education (Flexer et al., 2011, p. 88). The authors maintain that 'students who plan to enter post-secondary education clearly need to be included in the general education curriculum' (ibid., p. 92). According to their findings, learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities had lower odds of participating in higher education because of not passing the state graduation exams and having attended poorer secondary education programmes. These findings are in line with previous research (Newman, Wagner, Cameto and Knokey, 2009; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering and Kohler, 2009).

However, as is often the case, inclusion may be a necessary but insufficient condition for higher education enrolment. For example, the absence of a school leaving qualification creates a barrier to higher education enrolment. However, according to Wagner and Blackorby (1996), even among secondary school graduates, only 37% of those with disabilities had enrolled in higher education, compared to 78% of secondary school graduates in the general population who had been out of school for the same length of time. Other factors that prevent enrolment in higher education are lack of money, inadequate help with applications, poor identification of necessary accommodations, poor access to appropriate coursework, and low-quality transition plans (Flexer et al., 2011).

The literature indicates that the link between inclusive education and enrolment in higher education depends on effective transition planning that begins from secondary school. This entails close collaboration between the secondary school and the higher education institution. According to Gil, effective collaboration includes:

… *encouraging collaboration between secondary educators and postsecondary service providers, providing instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy skills, and ensuring that students and parents are equipped with the information they need to make educated decisions. Providing effective transition services using a collaborative approach will help to bridge the gap for students as they begin their postsecondary journey* (2007, p. 15).

To conclude, research evidence on the impact of inclusive education on higher education enrolment is limited, as researchers seem to be more interested in the quality of education and services people with disabilities receive once they are involved in higher education (refer to, for example, Beauchamp-Pryor, 2012; Connor, 2012; Botham and Nicholson, 2014).

3.3. Main findings

This chapter presented research documenting the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. The main findings suggest that:

- Inclusive education increases the opportunities for peer interactions and for close friendships between learners with and without disabilities.

- For social interactions and friendships to take place in inclusive settings, due consideration needs to be given to several elements that promote learners' participation (i.e. access, collaboration, recognition and acceptance).

- Learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may perform academically and socially better than learners educated in segregated settings.

- Attending and receiving support within inclusive education settings increases the likelihood of enrolling in higher education.

The following chapter presents the findings in relation to employment.

4. EMPLOYMENT

Securing paid employment in the open market is believed to be an important element leading to the social inclusion of people with disabilities. In fact, employment could be 'the sole mode of engagement in the community for about half of out-of-school youth with disabilities' (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza and Levin, 2005, p. ES-2). Furthermore, in many societies, having a paid job is part of 'becoming established in life' (Båtevik and Myklebust, 2006, p. 40).

This chapter discusses the evidence of the link between inclusive education and employment. It addresses several related issues, such as the interplay between a number of factors leading to paid jobs, and the link between education and different forms of employment.

4.1. The link between inclusive education and employment

According to the literature, people with disabilities face difficulties in entering the open market and securing a paid job:

… a disproportionate percentage of whom [people with disabilities] *leave high school and neither work nor continue their education.* […] *Substantially fewer youth with disabilities work for pay after leaving high school than youth in the general population – and while a lesser number are earning below minimum wage than in the past, only about one-third receive any type of employment benefits* (Shandra and Hogan, 2008, p. 3).

A number of social factors seem to influence this process. Yates and Roulstone (2013) argue that policy, local market and employment networks are critical factors. Their analysis suggests that policy often places the responsibility for employment on young people with disabilities themselves. At the same time, it leaves inaccessible employment structures and open market models for training unchanged. People with disabilities recognise that one

important barrier is employers' perceptions of disability, expressed through discriminatory practices and labelling (Shier, Graham and Jones, 2009). Apart from policy and social factors, the review of the literature identified several studies examining the factors influencing the likelihood of people with disabilities to be employed, as discussed below.

One important finding is that inclusive education leads to greater employment opportunities. Longitudinal studies conducted in Norway suggest that the likelihood of attaining economic independence through employment was found to be approximately twice as great for young people educated in inclusive settings compared to those taught in special classes (Myklebust and Båtevik, 2005; Båtevik and Myklebust, 2006). According to their findings, over 60% of adolescents educated in inclusive settings attained economic independence. In contrast, only about 35% succeeded among those who received their educational support in special classes. The researchers point out that placement practices vary between schools because there is no uniformity on the criteria guiding placement in inclusive or segregated settings. Nevertheless, they note that the group of disabled people who were educated in inclusive settings had increased formal competence and greater progress overall. Based on their findings, they conclude that:

The analyses presented in this paper indicate that placement in special classes is a risky venture. In addition to the fact that the chances of attaining competence are small in special classes, the vocational prospects are gloomy for those dropping out of these classes compared with those who turn their back on regular classes. The practical implication of this finding is that most students with special educational needs should receive their special support in regular classes. We assume that this will be a stimulus to achieve academic or vocational competence, which, in turn, will improve their chances of occupational success. If these students fail, they still have better occupational prospects than if they are educated in special classes (Myklebust and Båtevik, 2005, p. 283).

This finding is in line with the argument expressed by Yates and Roulstone (2013) that special schools have traditionally low qualification and skills expectations.

Other studies further argue that being educated in an inclusive setting increases the opportunities for employment. For example, Coyle's study (2012), focusing on the relationship between in-school education and employment for people with hearing impairments, suggests that being educated in an inclusive setting for the large majority of the school day, rather than being educated in a separate setting, increases the likelihood of employment after graduation from secondary school. In addition, the correlational study by White and Weiner (2004) suggests that one of the strongest predictors of paid, community employment for people with significant disabilities following school was the degree to which they were included in mainstream education contexts with age-appropriate peers prior to graduation.

The following section presents the findings on the variables that can increase the likelihood of employment.

4.2. Variables that can increase the likelihood of employment

The literature records a number of education-related variables that can increase the likelihood of people with disabilities securing paid employment. For example, the findings of the study by Doren and Benz (1998) indicate that participation in two or more jobs while in school, the use of the self-family-friend network, and high self-esteem are positively related to post-school employment. Other studies concerned with skills show that young people with disabilities who graduated with high academic skills (in reading, writing and maths) were twice as likely to be competitively employed compared to those with low skills (Benz, Yovanoff and Doren, 1997). In addition, graduates with good socio-personal skills (e.g. ability to make decisions, follow instructions, form relationships, etc.) are more likely to be smoothly included in employment settings (Vilà, Pallisera and Fullana, 2007). A number of studies suggest that time after leaving upper-secondary school is one of the variables related to employment. In particular, the first years after leaving upper-secondary school were termed a 'trial and error' period (Levine and Nourse, 1998 in Båtevik and Myklebust, 2006, p. 40). Often, people with disabilities do not become established in the job market until their late 20s.

Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000), summarise the variables that can increase the likelihood of people with disabilities being employed after graduating from secondary school, as follows:

- *Participation in vocational education classes during the last two years of high school*

- *Participation in paid work experience in the community during the last two years of high school*

- *Competence in functional academic (e.g., reading, math, writing, and problem-solving); community living (e.g., money management, community access); personal-social (e.g., getting along with others); vocational (e.g., career awareness, job search); and self-determination (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting) skills*

- *Participation in transition planning*

- *Graduation from high school*

- *Absence of continuing instructional needs in functional academic, vocational, and personal-social areas after leaving school* (2000, p. 510).

This section presents the findings of several studies that examined how a number of the aforementioned factors increase the likelihood of being employed.

4.2.1. Quality education and curriculum

The quality of education received in settings oriented towards inclusive principles (e.g. placement, curriculum, etc.) is linked with employment. Pallisera, Vilà and Fullana (2012) point out that a necessary step prior to examining how inclusive education

facilitates inclusion in the labour market is to examine the methodologies followed in secondary education and their potential to facilitate employment. They note that, in Spain, there are currently more studies concerned with the former than the latter. It is worth mentioning that although inclusive education was identified as one important factor leading to employment in the open market, it was not always one of the variables that the researchers were concerned with.

The quality of education is linked with the extent to which the curriculum fosters employment opportunities. Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) note that in secondary education, the curriculum can either limit or increase opportunities for learners with disabilities to receive education that is relevant to their post-school goals, and particularly employment goals. They argue that curricular limitations in relation to employment include a reduced number of elective courses and school-sponsored community work experiences. In the study, young people with disabilities discussed how they experienced these limitations. Linked with discussion about the elements of the curriculum that could lead to post-school social inclusion is the argument that forms of 'special' curriculum, adopted or designed exclusively for adolescents with disabilities, may lead to less access to transition resources and fewer opportunities for employment-relevant skills compared to their peers without disabilities (Shandra and Hogan, 2008). This leads to another important dimension related to post-school social inclusion; that is, the transition from school to work, discussed below.

4.2.2. Transition services

The transition from school to work is an important part of the process of constructing an identity as an adult member of the community (Båtevik and Myklebust, 2006; Pallisera, Vilà and Fullana, 2012; Ebersold, 2016). Research on the transition from school to work suggests that although transition no longer follows a linear process for young people without disabilities (e.g. extended transition, less settled lifestyle, less rigid sequence of events, etc.), it is even more complicated for young people with disabilities (Caton and Kagan, 2007). Pallisera, Vilà and Fullana (2012) identify two main lines of research focusing on the school's role in the inclusion of young people with disabilities in the labour market. The first is concerned with the factors that influence good practices and explores how education can facilitate the employment of people with disabilities. The second involves studying all the scenarios in relation to social inclusion, including securing employment, and examining whether they are part of the education system. It is useful to elaborate further on the first line of research, which links education with employment opportunities.

Transition services are often implemented through school-to-work programmes which can increase the opportunities of young people with disabilities to secure stable and full-time employment with fringe benefits after graduation (Shandra and Hogan, 2008). Benz, Yovanoff and Doren set out to answer the question of 'building comprehensive and inclusive school-to-work programs in local communities' (1997, p. 162). They argue that local programmes need to include the following features:

options for multiple pathways and timeframe; reasonable accommodations and support services; relevant performance indicators; adequate training and technical assistance of all personnel (ibid.).

In the literature, community-based transition in secondary schools is believed to be more effective than school-based transition. Cimera's study (2010) suggests that people with disabilities who participated in community-based transition programmes when they were in secondary school tended to keep their jobs nearly twice as long as those who participated in school-based transition programmes. In his study, Cimera clarified that community-based transition while learners were still in secondary school involved job shadowing, job sampling, vocational assessments, work adjustment, paid jobs and so on. School-based transition included vocational assessment, direct instruction, simulations or job sampling that occurred on school grounds (e.g. in the school's library, general store or cafeteria).

Båtevik and Myklebust (2006) support transition services that begin from inclusive school settings and are extended to include the community. They conclude that:

close co-operation between school and local business and industry provides a foundation for offering a more flexible and adaptable course of education, which, in turn, also increases the chances of a successful outcome. The importance of close co-operation applies to both pupils who aim to complete their studies with full academic or vocational qualifications and those who are attending a less ambitious course of training (p. 50).

The findings of the study by Pallisera, Vilà and Fullana (2012) warn of the limitations of school-based transition approaches. They note that actions related to the transition to employment:

- are usually concentrated in the final year of secondary school;
- are short;
- consist of general sessions presenting the different options after graduation and the different types of jobs;
- are implemented by specialist teachers without the involvement of mainstream class teachers.

Other studies concerned with specific impairment groups agree with the aforementioned findings. For example, Kaehne and Beyer (2008) found that advice on paid employment for people with learning disabilities is limited, unless employment organisations are involved. According to their findings, transition support at the time of graduation is often non-existent. Therefore, people with learning disabilities have limited awareness of available employment options. Consequently, many of them are placed in day centres that do not favour social inclusion.

4.2.3. Vocational qualifications

The findings of Båtevik and Myklebust (2006; Myklebust and Båtevik, 2005) confirm that the likelihood of young people with academic or vocational qualifications to hold a permanent job is more than 3.5 times greater than those without such competence. They add that young people with no formal competence who have been educated in mainstream classes are 2.8 times more likely to achieve economic independence compared with those educated in special classes.

The longitudinal study by Myklebust (2006; 2007) suggests that learners who receive special support in inclusive classrooms (i.e. limited support, support with personal assistants, and assistive technology) obtain vocational or academic qualifications to a greater degree than learners who are educated in special classes. In particular, learners receiving support in inclusive classes have a 76% greater chance of obtaining formal qualifications than those receiving adapted teaching in special classes. Learners following their educational schedule have twice the chances of attaining competence compared to those learners not on schedule in the second or third year of secondary education. According to his findings, this pattern applies regardless of learners' functional level.

Myklebust (2006; 2007) recognises that several studies do not indicate a strong link between inclusive education and academic achievement. However, at the same time, he notes that there can be methodological problems leading to these findings. It could also be that a number of settings – even though they are termed inclusive – fail to implement inclusive practices. For example, a longitudinal study by de Verdier and Ek (2014) focused on case studies of learners with visual impairments educated in Swedish mainstream settings. It concluded that schools termed inclusive have poor support services and teaching staff who lack knowledge about the meaning of inclusive education and about teaching learners with disabilities. Therefore, they fail to have a positive impact on learners' academic achievement.

The following section presents the findings in relation to the link between inclusive education and the open labour market.

4.3. The link between inclusive education and the open labour market

According to this review, being educated in an inclusive education setting can influence the type of employment (i.e. sheltered employment, supported employment, open employment and self-employment) of people with disabilities. To begin with, the option of sheltered employment is associated with education in special rather than inclusive settings. Gill (2005) argues that employment in sheltered workshops not only prevents the social inclusion of people with disabilities, but also contributes to their isolation. In his analysis, there is a clear parallel between special education systems and employment in sheltered workshops:

Educational systems help to prepare a future generation of employees. The isolation of employees in the workshop and the connection to this isolation is based upon a subordinate educational system that prepares the student for future placement in the workshop; the parallel to special education and the sheltered workshop does not seem like a difficult one to make. […] *Instead of being taught vocational skills that could provide some sort of advancement into a career or the option to enter into college, those in the special educational system are funneled into a workshop existence that creates isolation and docility and in which the overall social utility of the workshop is often questioned* (Gill, 2005, p. 621).

Linked to this discussion is the argument that sheltered workshops can contribute to preparing young people with disabilities for competitive employment. Cimera's (2011) large-scale research rejected this hypothesis. His comparison of two cohorts of people with intellectual disabilities, one in supported employment and one in supported sheltered employment, found no differences in the employment rates of the two groups. Therefore, he argues that sheltered workshops do not teach skills that make young people with disabilities more employable in the community.

Although the literature does not adequately draw the link between other types of employment and education, it could be argued that education in inclusive settings could lead to forms of employment that do not reproduce the ideas behind special education systems. Such forms of employment could be supported employment, open employment or self-employment. On the one hand, open employment and self-employment have always been options for people with disabilities who hold academic and vocational qualifications and skills (Lunt and Thornton, 1994; Pagán, 2009). Båtevik and Myklebust (2006) argue that, despite having received specialist provision in secondary education, after their graduation many people with disabilities are just 'former special needs students'. They do not necessarily see themselves as people with disabilities in relation to the job market. Therefore, this group is included in open employment or is self-employed. On the other hand, supported employment emerged as an option after dissatisfaction with sheltered employment, and it is premised on different assumptions (Lunt and Thornton, 1994). It is understood as the provision of services that help young people through on-site training and on-going support to secure jobs that are socially accepted (competitive, paid, in mainstream work settings) (Wilson, 2003; Lunt and Thornton, 1994). The challenge, as Wilson (2003) argues, is to go beyond supported employment and ensure that workplaces make the necessary adjustments for people with disabilities to work, rather than merely expect them to adjust to the given context.

4.4. Main findings

This chapter provided evidence to suggest that there is a link between inclusive education and employment. In particular, the main findings can be summarised as follows:

- Inclusive education increases opportunities for employment compared to education in segregated settings.

- A range of variables related to education can increase employment opportunities (e.g. quality education and curriculum, transition services and school-to-work programmes, vocational qualifications, gender differences, etc.).

- Inclusive education increases opportunities for employment in the open labour market rather than in sheltered employment.

The following chapter presents the findings in relation to the link between inclusive education and living in the community.

5. LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

This chapter presents research evidence on the link between inclusive education and living in the community. For the purposes of this review, living in the community refers to independent living, being financially independent, having friendships and social networks, and participating in leisure activities.

5.1. Independent living

Independent living is associated with the words 'choice' and 'control' (Morris, 2004, p. 428). In all cases, it requires that people with disabilities are responsible for their lives, and that they think and speak for themselves (HELIOS II, 1996). Several authors provide examples of what independent living is about. They include:

… living alone; living with a spouse or roommate; living in a college dormitory; living in military housing (Wagner, 1993); being married; being registered to vote; participating in social groups; or holding one of several items such as a driver's license, credit card, or checking account (Izzo et al., 2000) (Cobb et al., 2013, pp. 27–28).

Apart from being an umbrella term highlighting choice and control, independent living is also known as a movement of people with disabilities. According to the Southampton Centre for Independent Living (no date, in Morris, 2004), there are 12 'basic needs' that need to be met to achieve independent living:

- Full access to our environment
- Fully accessible transport system
- Technical aids – equipment
- Accessible adapted housing

- Personal assistance

- Inclusive education and training

- An adequate income

- Equal opportunities for employment

- Appropriate and accessible information

- Advocacy (towards self-advocacy)

- Counselling

- Appropriate and accessible healthcare provision (pp. 428–429).

In this context, inclusive education is one of the prerequisites for independent living.

Arguably, independent living has not been researched as extensively as participation in employment (Cobb et al., 2013). The articles collected for this review verify this statement, and suggest that inclusive education's impact on independent living has been researched even less. Frequently, authors discuss the barriers in social policies that prevent, rather than promote, independent living (Priestley, 2000; Morris, 2004; Pearson, 2012). These accounts sometimes refer to how educational policies often contribute to constructing the notion of the 'dependent' child (e.g. the child in need of charity, help, pity, etc.), who later in life becomes an adult who is dependent on the social welfare system. According to Priestley (2000), young people with disabilities are less likely to have their needs met within the mainstream education system and they are frequently subject to low expectations. As a result, even though they may have the same life course ambitions as their peers without disabilities, they often do not achieve as much in their adult life. Therefore, both education and social welfare policies are interlinked factors in achieving independent living.

The following section presents the findings in relation to financial independence.

5.2. Financial independence

Financial independence is correlated with being employed. According to Myklebust and Båtevik, youngsters with disabilities are financially independent when they 'have permanent full-time employment and earn sufficient pay to manage without additional support' (2014, p. 398). However, inclusive education's impact on financial independence is discussed in this chapter (rather than in Chapter 4 focusing on employment) because of the links raised in the literature with social structures and adult life courses that are relevant to different aspects of living in the community.

The review provides evidence to suggest that youngsters with disabilities attending inclusive education settings are more likely to be financially independent shortly after graduating from secondary education. In particular, longitudinal studies with a big sample of adolescents in their early twenties in Norway show that the likelihood of attaining economic independence increases when the adolescents are all offered specially adapted

teaching in mainstream classes at the start of their upper-secondary education (Myklebust and Båtevik, 2005). Moreover, the likelihood of attaining economic independence through employment was found to be approximately twice as great for young people educated in inclusive settings compared to those taught in special classes (Myklebust and Båtevik, 2005; Båtevik and Myklebust, 2006). In particular, over 60% of adolescents educated in inclusive settings attained economic independence, compared to about 35% of those who received their educational support in special classes.

Inclusive education's impact on increasing the likelihood of financial independence seems to be reduced in the long run. The longitudinal studies by Myklebust and Båtevik (2005; 2014) show that about 50% of people with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may be called financially independent in their late twenties and their mid-thirties. In addition, 23% of people with disabilities are not always financially independent, which means that they sometimes depend on social security benefits.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies reveal that inclusive education's impact on financial independence weakens as time from graduation increases. This is because of a range of factors influencing a person's life course. For example, Skjong and Myklebust (2016) conducted a narrative analysis of life course trajectories of seven young adult males, over a period of 17 years from their enrolment in upper-secondary school. They concluded that both social structures and the earlier life course affect one's opportunities for joining the labour market and gaining financial independence. For instance, there are life course incidents that act as turning points in a person's life, such as accidents and poor health. In addition, the choices a person makes at a young age may influence their life course. In this study, five out of seven participants were educated in inclusive settings.

Another study by Myklebust (2015) concluded that more than one third of the people with disabilities were not financially independent and, thus, they were dependent on social security. The study followed a sample of 373 people with disabilities in Norway, from their teens up to their late twenties. According to the findings, women had more risk of social security dependence than men. The study identified several risk factors for dependence on social security:

- Schooling in special classes, especially for men
- Support from teaching assistants that reduces interaction with qualified teachers, especially for men
- Receiving low marks or no marks at all
- Quitting school or staying in school longer than typical.

Myklebust argues that these factors contribute to 'disordered transitions' (2015, p. 262) that influence the person's life course.

The following section presents the findings in relation to friendships and social networks.

5.3. Friendships and social networks

Chapter 3 on education has already presented evidence of the link between inclusive education and friendships. It highlighted friendships and peer interactions taking place during school life. This section revisits this topic to address the link between the two during adult life.

Longitudinal studies provide evidence to suggest that education in special settings has a negative impact on forming social networks shortly after graduation from secondary school. Kvalsund and Bele (2010a; 2010b) followed a sample of 500 young people with disabilities for eight years, from upper-secondary school until the age of 22. According to their findings:

The analysis of the transition between school and early adult life shows that special classes may be considered risk factors for producing social marginalization and isolation, whereas regular mainstream classes are a factor of resilience for producing social integration in early adult life (2010a, p. 32).

Other longitudinal studies verify this finding. However, they point out that, over the years, social networks for people with disabilities change and the negative impact of special classes is less evident. For example, the longitudinal study by Bele and Kvalsund (2015; 2016), with a sample of 372 young people with disabilities, shows that 'having been a special class student has significant negative consequences for the individuals several years after completing upper secondary school' (2015, p. 215). In particular, at the age of 24, the participants attending special classes were more likely to be in a small and isolated social network. However, at the age of 29, the characteristics of the social networks changed, and thus, the special class variable loses effect. The researchers explain that:

… having work, own family, driver's license […] changes network characteristics and agency from being self-realising and individualistic towards a more collective, altruistic and self-sacrificing action pattern in social relationships (2015, p. 195).

The authors note that:

This result should not be interpreted as indicating that concern about the challenges of attending special class is unnecessary. However, it reveals the power of individual agency when contexts and structures change and increase the potential for resilient building of social relationships (2015, p. 215).

It is worth noting that, in all cases, the researchers state clearly that there are factors that cannot be controlled in these kind of longitudinal studies, such as the different life courses of the participants.

Other studies verify the changing nature of social networks as people with disabilities age. For example, Parsons (2015) conducted a survey in England on 55 adults on the autistic spectrum, aged 17–59. Her findings suggest that the majority of the participants were satisfied with their social networks, although these were not wide. Parsons notes that

there was a 'significant positive correlation between experiences at school and ratings of current life satisfaction' (p. 397). It is worth noting that, although the study did not directly examine the impact of inclusive settings on social networks, most of the participants attended inclusive settings.

The following section presents the findings in relation to participation in leisure activities.

5.4. Leisure activities

Living in the community is correlated with participating in leisure activities, either as children or adults. Murphy, Carbone and the Council on Children with Disabilities suggest that:

… participation in activities is the context in which people form friendships, develop skills and competencies, express creativity, achieve mental and physical health, and determine meaning and purpose in life (2008, p. 1057).

Part of the information this section presents is relevant to Chapter 3 on education. However, this chapter revisits participation in leisure activities, as the review of the literature identified studies focusing on both youngsters and adults with disabilities. In addition, research evidence concerning children with disabilities focuses on their participation in out-of-school activities taking place in the community, rather than activities taking place within the school setting, which was the focus of Chapter 3.

Being educated in an inclusive setting may increase the opportunities for participation in social and recreational activities. However, as is the case in other aspects of living in the community, inclusive education is one of the factors that contribute to this outcome. According to the findings of Orsmond, Krauss and Seltzer:

Greater participation in social and recreational activities was predicted by greater independence in activities of daily living, a greater number of internalizing behavior problems, less impairment in reciprocal social interaction skills, a greater number of services received, greater maternal participation in social and recreational activities, and inclusion while in school (2004, p. 251).

This is one of the few studies that were longitudinal. It examined a large sample of people with autism, including adolescents (aged between 10–21) and adults (aged between 22–47) residing in Wisconsin and Massachusetts. According to their findings, 'being educated in a fully or partially inclusive school environment were both associated with greater participation in social and recreational activities' (Orsmond, Krauss and Seltzer, 2004, p. 254). The researchers argue that placement in inclusive classroom settings enhances the participation of children with autism in out-of-school activities, although they note that peer relationships are more difficult to predict.

A number of researchers are concerned about the extent to which people with disabilities attending inclusive education settings are truly included in social terms. For example, some of them raise the issue of the physical presence of children with disabilities in leisure and

recreation activities versus meaningful social inclusion. Solish, Perry and Minnes argue that:

With the increasing emphasis on community and social inclusion for individuals with disabilities, it is important to differentiate between children with disabilities experiencing the benefits of social inclusion and friendship, versus being physically included but possibly still socially excluded from meaningful interactions with peers. It is possible that these children could be engaging in a number of activities with 'peers' (i.e. same-aged individuals), but still not have the opportunity to experience true inclusion, significant social relationships, or friendships (2010, p. 235).

The concern expressed by Solish et al. (2010) stems from their study in which they compared the participation of children with and without disabilities in out-of-school activities. Their findings suggest that children without disabilities participated in more social and recreational activities than children with disabilities (i.e. children with autism and intellectual disabilities). Although the study does not provide information about the educational setting of the participants (special or mainstream school), it suggests that children with disabilities who participated in a number of social and recreational activities did so with their parents and other adults. Therefore, they suggest that future research in this area should focus not only on activity participation of children with disabilities in leisure and recreation activities, but also examine related factors. These include how these children experience participation and whether other adults accompany adolescents and adults with disabilities, rather than attending them independently and/or with friends (Solish et al., 2010).

Other researchers are concerned with equalising leisure with therapy. Buttimer and Tierney warn of the danger of 'medicalizing' activities (2005, p. 36). They argue that when 'art becomes art therapy, gardening becomes horticultural therapy and music becomes music therapy' (ibid.), the medical model of disability is reinforced. Along the same lines, Ertuzun (2015) argues that the literature records many studies about the physical development of people with intellectual disabilities through their participation in physical sporting activities. However, there are very few studies examining their participation in such activities for fun and relaxation. In this context, the 'perceived freedom in leisure' (that is, to have control over leisure experiences and experience satisfaction of leisure needs from their participation) is an under-examined area (ibid., p. 2362).

This concern is linked with low attendance in after-school clubs recorded in some studies. According to the findings of a longitudinal study following a big cohort of primary school learners in England, learners with disabilities attending inclusive settings were less likely than learners without disabilities to attend after-school clubs at age 11 (Callanan, Laing, Chanfreau, Paylor, Skipp, Tanner and Todd, 2016). Parents raised concerns about the capacity of after-school clubs to meet their children's needs. The researchers note that 41% of all learners with a disability or illness belonged to the 'self-directed social group', which included learners who had unstructured social time with friends and more screen time (e.g. watching television or playing video games). Although most of the learners who belonged to this group had at least one organised activity, they were less likely to participate in activities and after-school clubs. Given the parents' concerns that after-school clubs do not meet their children's needs, it could be inferred that parents prefer

that their children participate in after-school activities of a therapeutic nature. However, the aforementioned study did not research this.

According to the review, being educated in a special setting is one significant barrier to the participation of people with disabilities in leisure activities. Buttimer and Tierney (2005) found that learners with disabilities attending special schools tended to participate in solitary and passive leisure activities, such as talking on the phone and reading magazines. In addition, the majority of their participants depended on their parents or other family members to organise and participate in leisure activities, such as visiting family or friends, eating out and shopping. The researchers argue that attending special schools away from their community leads to limited familiarity with local community and lack of independence in travelling. Negative social stereotypes and attitudinal barriers in the community are also an obstacle, since they seem to contribute to a lack of awareness in relation to opportunities for participation and a lack of support from schools and communities (Murphy, Carbone and the Council on Children with Disabilities, 2008). Other barriers identified include high costs, lack of nearby facilities or programmes and high cost/lack of specialised equipment (ibid.; Stanton-Chapman and Schmidt, 2016).

5.5. Main findings

This chapter presented research evidence that addresses the positive relationship between inclusive education and living in the community. Research evidence suggests that:

- Inclusive education is one of the factors that increase opportunities for independent living.

- Youngsters with disabilities attending inclusive education settings are more likely to be financially independent shortly after graduating from secondary education. However, as people age, other factors influence their life course. This sometimes lead to dependence on social security income.

- Youngsters with disabilities attending segregated settings are less likely to have friendships and social networks in their adult life. Over the years, the social networks of people with disabilities change due to individual preferences and different life course trajectories.

- Being educated in an inclusive setting is one of the factors that increase opportunities for participation in leisure activities. Being educated in a segregated setting acts as a barrier to participation. However, the participation of people with disabilities in leisure activities needs to be interpreted with caution, as sometimes leisure is equated with physical presence or therapy, and it does not lead to the people's satisfaction.

The following chapter summarises the literature review's main findings in the areas of education, employment and living in the community. Based on these findings, the chapter provides some key policy messages and considerations on the topic.

6. MAIN FINDINGS AND KEY POLICY MESSAGES

This review of the literature presented the main findings of published research demonstrating the link between inclusive education and social inclusion. Research on this topic has its limitations (e.g. methodological ambiguities, research that cannot be generalised in different national contexts, etc.). Nevertheless, synthesising the evidence leads to a number of findings that are presented in this chapter. The main findings point out that apart from inclusive education, other variables play a role in the social inclusion of people with disabilities over their life course. This realisation informs the key policy messages and considerations presented at the end of this chapter.

6.1. Main findings

The literature review's main findings are divided into three sub-sections: education, employment and living in the community.

6.1.1. Education

Research indicates that:

- Inclusive education increases the opportunities for peer interactions and the formation of close friendships between learners with and without disabilities.
    - Although social relationships are complex to measure, the social interactions taking place in inclusive settings are a prerequisite for the development of friendships, social and communication skills, support networks, a sense of belonging, and positive behavioural outcomes.
- For social interactions and friendships to take place in inclusive settings, due consideration needs to be given to several elements that promote learners' participation (i.e. access, collaboration, recognition and acceptance).

- Achieving the social inclusion of learners with disabilities in inclusive settings is about increasing participation in all areas, among all stakeholders (i.e. staff, learners and parents) and at all levels (i.e. school policy and practice, school culture).

- The social inclusion of learners with disabilities is not achieved when their participation is hindered because of negative attitudes towards disability and exclusionary school structures (e.g. limited accessibility, lack of flexibility, exemption from subjects that are believed to be 'difficult').

- Learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may perform academically and socially better than learners educated in segregated settings.

- Attending and receiving support within inclusive education settings increases the likelihood of enrolment in higher education.

  - The link between inclusive education and enrolment in higher education is dependent upon effective transition planning that begins from the secondary school and involves the community.

  - A number of factors act as barriers to enrolment in higher education, for example: lack of money, inadequate help with applications, poor identification of needed accommodations, poor access to appropriate coursework, and low-quality transition plans.

6.1.2. Employment

Research indicates that:

- Attending an inclusive education setting is one of the factors that increase the likelihood of people with disabilities being employed.

  - Apart from education, employment opportunities for people with disabilities are influenced by a number of social factors, such as policy, local market, employment networks, employers' attitudes, and accessible employment structures.

- The nature of the curriculum can either limit or increase opportunities for young people with disabilities to be employed.

  - Securing access in the curriculum leads to academic and vocational qualifications that increase employment opportunities.

  - Forms of 'special' curriculum, adopted or designed exclusively for adolescents with disabilities, may limit employment opportunities.

- High-quality transition programmes provided in secondary school may increase the likelihood of people with disabilities being employed.

  - Community-based transition programmes taking place in secondary schools are believed to be more effective for securing a job than school-based transition programmes.

- o Transition programmes that are short and are implemented by specialist teachers without the involvement of mainstream class teachers limit opportunities for employment in the open labour market.
- Being educated in an inclusive education setting can influence the type of employment (i.e. sheltered employment, supported employment, open employment and self-employment) of people with disabilities.
  - o Being educated in a segregated setting is associated with securing employment in sheltered workshops (that arguably contributes to the isolation rather than the social inclusion of people with disabilities).
  - o Being educated in an inclusive setting leads to academic and vocational qualifications and skills that increase the likelihood of choosing other forms of employment, such as supported employment, open employment and self-employment.

6.1.3. Living in the community

Research indicates that:

- Education and social welfare policies are two interlinked factors in achieving independent living.
  - o Inclusive education is one of the factors that increase the opportunities for independent living.
  - o Poor education in the mainstream school, in combination with weak social welfare policies, decreases the likelihood of independent living.
- Youngsters with disabilities attending inclusive education settings are more likely to be financially independent shortly after graduating from secondary education.
  - o Inclusive education's impact on financial independence weakens as time from graduation increases because of a range of factors influencing a person's life course. This may lead to dependence on social security income.
- Youngsters with disabilities attending segregated settings are less likely to have friendships and social networks in their adult life.
  - o Over the years, the social networks of people with disabilities change due to individual preferences and different life course trajectories, and the negative impact of special classes is less evident.
- Being educated in an inclusive setting is one of the factors that increase the opportunities for participation in leisure activities. Being educated in a segregated setting acts as a barrier to participation.
  - o However, the participation of people with disabilities in leisure activities needs to be interpreted with caution, as sometimes leisure is equated with physical presence or therapy, and it does not lead to the people's satisfaction.

6.2. Key policy messages and considerations

In summary, the review of the literature indicates the evidence to suggest that there is a link between inclusive education and social inclusion in the areas of education, employment and living in the community. At the same time, it has identified other factors that promote or hinder social inclusion. In light of these findings, policy-makers could consider the development of evidence-based policies aiming to enhance the social inclusion of people with disabilities over their life course.

Apart from the European and international advocacy for moving towards inclusive education systems, this review provides policy-makers with research evidence on the positive impact of inclusive education on social inclusion. What's more, the review highlights that policies that view inclusive education as mere placement in the mainstream school hinder the participation of learners with disabilities, and thus do not lead to social inclusion. For inclusive education to have an impact on social inclusion, it is necessary to ensure, through policy and practice, that learners with disabilities participate on equal terms with learners without disabilities in all aspects of schooling (e.g. learning, playing, having access to all school areas and activities, etc.). Furthermore, policy, subsequent regulations and quality assurance standards need to make clear that, in inclusive education systems, both academic and social achievement are of interest.

Policy-makers should consider how policy could best regulate the transitions from one system to another, and from one life period to another in order to maintain or increase social inclusion opportunities. For example, the review suggested that inclusive education increases the likelihood of enrolment in higher education. However, at the same time, other variables, such as lack of guidance and transition plans, may act as barriers. Similarly, the review suggested that inclusive education increases the likelihood of securing a paid job in the open labour market. Nevertheless, other factors, such as policy and inaccessible employment settings, act as barriers. In these and other cases, policy-makers need to consider how to ensure the investment made in inclusive education is appreciated by other policies affecting people with disabilities as they grow older.

Another issue for consideration in relation to policy is how to prolong the positive impact of inclusive education. The review suggested that, although inclusive education has a positive effect on employment and financial independence shortly after graduation from secondary school, the impact weakens as time from graduation increases. It is argued that this is the outcome of different personal factors, such as a person's life trajectory, possible accidents and illness, family conditions, and so on. However, policy could consider how to further promote the social inclusion of people with disabilities through employment as they grow older and become an at-risk group.

Finally, the research evidence presented in this review suggested that attending segregated settings minimises the opportunities for social inclusion both in the short term (while children with disabilities are at school) and the long term (after graduation from secondary education). Attending a special setting is correlated with poor academic and vocational qualifications, employment in sheltered workshops, financial dependence, fewer opportunities to live independently, and poor social networks after graduation. In this

context, policy-makers could consider how to re-design the specialist provision that is available in many countries in order to support learning in inclusive education settings.

6.3. Concluding comments

This literature review suggested that there is a link between inclusive education and social inclusion in the areas of education, employment and living in the community. At the same time, it pointed out that there are other factors that promote or hinder social inclusion. These may include policy in areas other than education, community structures, and so on. Future research could further explore learners' experiences throughout their school life in different contexts, school policy and practice, and structures/programmes securing the transition from education to employment and living in the community. Such research would shed light on the variables that make social inclusion possible. Longitudinal studies are also important in addressing the link between inclusive education and social inclusion in all three areas (education, employment and living in the community). Such studies could further highlight how inclusive education policy and other policies (e.g. social policy, employment policy) promote or hinder social inclusion in different contexts.

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