Inclusive Education in Europe:
Putting theory into practice

International Conference - 18 November 2013

Reflections from researchers

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EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency; formerly known as the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education) is an independent and self-governing organisation, supported by Agency member countries and the European Institutions (Commission and Parliament).

CONTENTS

PREAMBLE

In November 2013, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency; formerly known as the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education) organised an International Conference which facilitated an open debate on **inclusive education**.

The debate involved all relevant stakeholders: decision-makers, researchers and practitioners, as well as people with disabilities and their families.

Talking about inclusive education implies talking about differences: how to deal with differences in schools, in classrooms and in the curriculum in general. This is the main reflection that Cor J. W. Meijer, the Agency's Director, presents and develops in this document's first paper.

The Agency has requested that the six invited keynote speakers prepare a document for the conference with their own reflections on the key messages that were debated during the conference. This document presents all of them. We are sure that these papers will be helpful and will contribute to reflecting upon such an important topic.

- Diane Richler, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation International Fellow, provides the theoretical framework on inclusive education from a human-rights perspective.

- Susan McKenney, from the Open University of the Netherlands and University of Twente, presents key reflections on the importance and benefits of early intervention.

- Per Skoglund, from the Swedish National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, presents the benefits of inclusive education for all learners.

- Gerardo Echeita, from the Autonomous University of Madrid in Spain, presents the need for well qualified professionals and teachers, especially as far as inclusive education is concerned.

- Tom Parrish, from the American Institutes for Research in the United States, gives an overview on financial policies supporting inclusive education.

- Lani Florian, from the University of Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, reflects on the need to collect reliable data.

The Agency wishes to express its gratitude to all of them for their participation and contribution to this important debate.

Per Ch. Gunnvall   Cor J. W. Meijer
Chair   Director

EUROPEAN AGENCY: KEY MESSAGES AND OUTLOOK

Cor J. W. Meijer
Director of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The aim of this paper is to reflect upon some key issues relating to the Agency's work over the past 15 years. The most important challenge in education is how to deal with differences. If schools, classrooms and the curriculum in general fail to take differences between learners into account, inclusion will remain confined to a debate among policy-makers, experts and those not actually involved in practical education. Teachers have to cope with a variety of children in the classroom and need to know how to do so.

We must be aware of how we approach learners; differences among learners normally follow a bell-shaped distribution. Unfortunately, very often we assume that learners have the same type of skills or starting points. Research shows, for example, that degrees of cognitive development can differ by up to almost two years among children at the age of six, which is when they begin school in some countries. So why do we expect all six-year-old children to have the same level when it comes to learning to read or understanding language?

Perceiving education in this 'homogeneous' way is problematic. Some pupils become bored because they already have reading skills. Others are not there yet. In this situation, the standard curriculum can even give rise to behaviour problems. It is important to highlight that most referrals from mainstream schools relate to pupils aged between seven and nine, which is when reading achievement is becoming the biggest problem for schools.

The key question is: how do we deal with differences? How do we cope with variety among learners?

I would like to share some lessons from the Agency's past work. I also want to mention a few key issues concerning the challenges and progress we have seen in Europe. Finally, I would like to outline some of our future plans.

In general, one can see a shift in the debate about inclusion: the debate started with questions about what exactly inclusive education is and why we actually think that inclusive education is necessary. The debate is currently moving towards the question: how do we achieve inclusive education? I think we all agree that inclusion is important and a good thing. However, it is not only about opinions and attitudes – it is about how to do it in practice.

We have seen in our different studies and work that teacher training, curriculum and school organisation are all central factors in achieving inclusive education. Is it

possible to implement inclusion when teachers lack the skills and competences and do not have an inclusive attitude? Then surely it is impossible to make progress in relation to the objectives specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) of 2006 and the Europe 2020 targets. For that reason we have developed a profile of inclusive teachers in the mainstream school. The key aspect of that profile is not direct knowledge and skills relating to certain specific types of disabilities, but rather the more general skills, competences and attitudes that are needed to deal with a variety of learners in the classroom. Basically, our focus is not only on learners with special educational needs – it is on raising achievement for all children.

As the Maltese Minister of Education remarked recently, 'What we want to give to a minority, we don't want to take away from a majority'. The Agency's work focuses upon dealing with learning issues and diversity in education as a quality issue.

Now, let us first examine some recent developments in Europe and then come back to the debate described above. One of the key developments we see in Europe is that in many countries the placement decision is not restricted to just mainstream or special schools. There are a lot of intermediate possibilities provided along the continuum between these two options. All the countries show strong development with regard to transforming special schools or special institutions into resource centres. These resource centres' tasks go far beyond just dealing with learners with disabilities. They also train teachers, guide parents and develop materials, as well as act as intermediaries for the other services involved.

Another development relates to the number of pupils in special provision. All over Europe, slightly more than 2% of pupils are in separate settings – and this is an increase compared to 10–15 years ago. This seems paradoxical, given that the topic of inclusion is increasingly present on the policy agenda. These two issues – a growth in pupils in special provision and increased interest in inclusion – do not sit well together. There is huge variation across the European countries: some countries have 4–5% of pupils in special settings, while in others it is less than 1%. Some countries that have more than 4% of pupils in special settings have ratified the UNCRPD of 2006 and have ratified its Optional Protocol. Article 24 says that states should ensure inclusive education at all educational levels. Particularly for those countries with more than 4% of pupils in segregated provisions, there is a long way to go. It seems that this discrepancy between policy and practice requires further exploration. One possible explanation is increased competition between schools, regions and even countries in relation to learner achievement.

Let me give you an example to illustrate the consequences that organisation of provision might have upon educational outcomes. Imagine we have a group of ten people with an average body weight of 100 kg (some weigh 80 kg or 90 kg, others

110 kg or 120 kg). Now imagine that we also have a group of ten people who are not so heavy, with an average weight of 50 kg. Then say we move three people with the relatively lowest body weight from the 'heavy' group (those in the 80–90 kg range) to the lighter group. The result is that the average body weight increases in both groups! The average of the lighter group goes from 50 kg to over 55 kg and the average of the heavy group goes from 100 kg to above 105 kg. This looks very strange: both averages increase!

The same could apply to educational practice: when students are referred to special settings the average outcome of mainstream schools goes up, as does the average achievement of special schools. We know from earlier studies that a strong emphasis on outcomes and competition does not favour vulnerable learners: due to strategic behaviour on the part of schools, parents and other professionals involved in referral procedures, learners with disabilities who might threaten schools' general outcomes may be placed in special settings earlier or even refused entry to mainstream schools.

This phenomenon invites us to reflect on another issue: whether there is any relationship between the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from all our countries and the level of participation in special schools in the same countries. If we find that the ranking is influenced by schools' referral rates, then we will have a really important discussion on our hands.

An initial rough calculation of the relationship between the percentage of segregated students per country and the ranking for reading level does in fact show a significant correlation. This would indicate that PISA ranking is influenced by the percentage of segregated students! The assumption here is that the ranking of countries is a sort of competition between countries, which is not to the advantage of learners with disabilities. The more students in special schools, the higher the outcomes! It is probably too much to assume that countries really are in competition and that they therefore have planned and acted strategically in the area of placement of students. However, we have seen this within countries where the outcomes of schools are openly published. As mentioned earlier, this could be explained by strategic behaviour at various levels. Firstly at parents' level: they do not want to send their children to a school at the bottom of the list. Also at school level: they are probably not eager to have students who lower their average in their schools. Strong competition between schools, regions and even countries is not in the interests of weaker and vulnerable students.

The challenge for our Agency is to demonstrate that excellence and inclusion, or equity and quality, can go hand-in-hand. Indeed, the Agency's work has demonstrated that inclusion and excellent school achievement can be successfully

combined. We have seen in many countries that it is not an either/or issue. We tend to look at it as either high achievement and high quality or inclusion. If you are an inclusive school, your achievement will go down. We have evidence that schools are able to perfectly combine these two aspects. The Agency recently began a project, entitled 'Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education', through which we hope to provide you with more evidence on how this can be achieved and which factors contribute to a high-quality inclusive school. High-quality education, with high output, can be combined with an inclusive school policy. Of course, a lot of things need to be done. We already know that peer tutoring, co-teaching and visionary leadership at school level contribute to this aim.

In short, if you maintain homogeneous approaches in schools, forget about inclusive education. If you maintain a homogeneous curriculum, inclusion will remain a conceptual debate. It is time for change!

The UNCRPD is one of the tools that can change this way of thinking. Many of the Agency's member countries have ratified the final stage of the Convention (the Optional Protocol). In light of this, substantial changes will occur in those countries. This is also the case when you take into account the comments that countries receive from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which are quite stringent and forthright. Furthermore, the fact that the Optional Protocol provides mechanisms for individuals to complain about governments or policy-makers will act as a tool for change in the future.

The Agency will be very active in this process. We will try to provide evidence-based information that might help policy-makers to develop and implement decisions that contribute to the foreseen and desired change. Moreover, we are planning two further concrete changes in our future work. The first one is to give countries more specific help with implementing the outcomes of our work. We will not just provide them with findings and analysis, but also offer concrete policy recommendations and guidelines that can be used for future change and policy development. The second development expected for the Agency involves monitoring progress more actively. This means informing countries about their progress in terms of achieving goals related to the Europe 2020 targets and the UNCRPD.

These are just some of the challenges for our future work.

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Diane Richler
Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation

The challenge of achieving inclusive education – education systems which ensure quality outcomes for all learners and exclude no-one – is usually considered from the perspective of educators. However, the right to education is one of the fundamental universally-accepted human rights. What are the implications of considering inclusive education from a human-rights perspective?

Despite the fact that the number of children excluded from education has been decreasing since the launch of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2013), some children – such as children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities – are disproportionately excluded from school (United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF, 2013). Moreover, all too often, if children from these groups are at school, they are segregated in special settings, denied the opportunity to access the regular curriculum and kept apart from those in the mainstream system (Inclusion International, 2009).

Yet considering inclusive education as a matter of human rights is a challenge for educators, and often even for human rights advocates. Most people find it easy to understand some kinds of human rights violations and their remedies, such as abolishing slavery in favour of freedom, or eliminating torture. However, understanding inclusive education as a matter of human rights is more of a challenge.

This paper will discuss:

- how the concept of human rights has evolved, from a focus on civil and political rights to a focus on social rights, and from protecting the individual to influencing public policy;

- how law and litigation have created pressure for change;

- how compliance with the right to inclusive education requires systemic overhaul, from identifying students in need to a focus on universal design that includes all; and

- how complying with the right to inclusive education is not easy, but is possible.

The evolution of human rights

Codes of human rights have existed for over 5,000 years. Menes, the first Pharaoh of the Egyptian dynasty, established a code of conduct; in the 6th century BCE (before the common era), Cyrus the Great issued the 'Charter of Freedom of Mankind', which recognised racial, linguistic and religious equality (The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, undated). Although European countries began to develop human rights instruments in the 13th century, human rights were not a matter of wide global debate and influence until the end of the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations (UN).

Human Rights in Europe

1215, England: Magna Carta (The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, undated)

1573, Poland: Henrician Articles and Pacta Conventa (Encyclopaedia Britannica, undated)

1689, Scotland: Claim of Right and Articles of Grievances (Education Scotland, undated)

1689, England: Declaration of Right (Neier, 2012)

1789, Belgium (Liège): Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of Franchimont (Histoire des Belges, undated)

1793, France: The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Neier, op. cit.)

Early struggles for human rights focused almost exclusively on civil and political rights and protection from the state: witness the English Revolution, the French Revolution, the anti-slavery movement, the women's suffrage movement. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948, devotes its first 21 articles to such rights. Then, for the first time in an international agreement, it articulates economic and social rights – including the right to education – because many argued that individuals could not enjoy the former if they were denied the latter.

With the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the treaties that emanated from it, economic, social and cultural rights became widely recognised and the right to education became entrenched in international law – but only after a fierce struggle as to whether social, economic and cultural rights deserved protection. That is why it took almost 20 years to progress from the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR, 1976a) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (OHCHR, 1976b), both of which were adopted in 1966 and came into force in 1976. A commitment to human rights is one of the

fundamental underpinnings of the European Union, as articulated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Treaty of Lisbon. States must ratify the European Convention on Human Rights to become members of the Council of Europe.

What are human rights and what is the implication of the right to education?

Aryeh Neier, former president of the Open Society Foundations and founder of Human Rights Watch, defines rights as 'ethical norms with a legal content that requires that they should be honored and enforced by public institutions' (Neier, 2012, p. 57). At the national, regional and international level, a complex system has been created for monitoring and enforcing human rights. While the monitoring of civil and political rights has focused primarily on protecting the individual, the gradually growing emphasis on economic and social rights has demanded a change in public policy.

The first global commitment to the right to education is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which simply states: 'Everyone has the right to education' (United Nations, 1948). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) goes one step further in ensuring that the 'disabled child […] receives education […] in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development' (United Nations, 1989, Article 23).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – the first international treaty of the 21st century – illustrates the implications of the shift from a focus on the individual to a reform of public policy. The purpose of the CRPD is 'to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity' (United Nations, 2006a, Article 1). The CRPD was not designed to give new rights to persons with disabilities, but rather to articulate the meaning of existing rights to persons with disabilities. However, its unique feature is that it not only affords individual protection and support, but also demands changes in public institutions and society. A personal reflection is that although initially most of the organisations of persons with disabilities who were involved in the negotiation process were seeking a series of entitlements based on their specific group's needs, there was a gradual recognition that in order for human rights to be respected, systems, including the education system, need to change. Therefore, the CRPD requires that individual supports be provided, but furthermore it requires 'an inclusive education system at all levels' (Ibid., Article 24).

There is a close relationship between several elements of Article 24 of the CRPD on the right to education and the key messages developed for the *Inclusive Education in Europe* conference. For example, the conference's Key Message 4 on support

systems and funding mechanisms relates to the rights protected in Article 24.2 (c), (d) and (e) for:

- reasonable accommodation;

- support required within the general education system; and

- effective individualised support measures.

Similarly, Article 24.3 (a), (b) and (c) protect the rights to:

- learning of Braille, alternate script, augmentative and alternate modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills and facilitating peer support and mentoring;

- learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community; and

- ensuring that the education of children who are blind, deaf or deafblind is in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication.

With respect to Key Message 2 – that inclusive education benefits all – the CRPD Article 24.1 ensures an inclusive system at all levels. Article 24.2 ensures that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system and that they can access inclusive education. Article 24.5 guarantees access to general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning.

Key Message 3, on the need for highly qualified professionals, relates to Article 24.4 which guarantees the employment of teachers, *including teachers with disabilities*, qualified in sign language and/or Braille and the training of professionals and other staff. Ironically, there are several countries where persons with disabilities are prohibited by law from being teachers, even if they have graduated from the appropriate professional training facilities.

In addition to Article 24, which focuses on the right to education, there are several other articles of the CRPD which protect the right to inclusive education:

- The Preamble identifies the need for family members to receive protection and assistance in order to assist their disabled family member to exercise their rights.

- Article 3 on General Principles underlines the goal of full and effective participation and inclusion in society (which is reinforced by Key Message 2);

- Article 5 guarantees equality and non-discrimination;

- Article 7 on Children guarantees the right to early and comprehensive services and supports (which is reinforced by Key Message 1);

- Article 8 calls for awareness-raising, which is needed to change public attitudes;

- Article 9 guarantees accessibility – of schools and the means of getting there;

- Article 23 guarantees respect for home and family, which means that students should not have to move away from home to attend school (which is of course most relevant for young children);

- Article 27 guarantees work and employment – which means that education needs to be preparing students for employment and relates back to the need for persons with disabilities to become teachers;

- Article 30 on the right to culture, recreation, leisure and sport means that students have the right to participate in inclusive non-academic activities, both at school and in the community;

- Article 31 on statistics and data collection requires states to gather disaggregated data on students with disabilities (which is supported by Key Message 5);

- Article 32 on international co-operation requires that states and multi-lateral agencies which support education in poorer countries must promote inclusive systems; and

- Article 33 on implementation and monitoring requires that states have a plan for implementing the CRPD and make regular reports to the United Nations Committee responsible for its monitoring on progress.

The overlap between the CRPD and the key messages of the *Inclusive Education in Europe* conference is striking and encouraging. However, there is a big difference between them. The key messages are lessons learned by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education about how to make inclusion successful. Governments and education authorities can pay attention to them or not. However, the articles of the CRPD are *human rights*. The articles of the CRPD are legally binding in the states which are party to the convention, and they must comply.

In Europe, the CRPD has been ratified by all countries, except Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Netherlands (United Nations, undated) and it is the first convention to have been ratified by the European Union.

Ratification of the CRPD requires countries to submit regular reports on their compliance with the Convention. An independent committee, composed of experts elected by all parties to the Convention and operating under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, reviews these reports and also solicits input from civil society organisations on the accuracy and completeness of

the government report. On the date of this conference, Spain, Hungary and Austria are the European countries which have submitted their reports and had them reviewed by the committee. After studying the government reports, holding dialogue with government officials and receiving input from disability organisations, the CRPD Committee has stated – strongly in some cases – that the governments are not adequately complying with Article 24.

In September 2011, the CRPD Committee issued its Concluding Observations on Spain's compliance with the CRPD, stating:

> *The Committee commends the State party for the high percentage (78.35 per cent) of enrolment of children with disabilities in the regular education system, and for the efforts made to maintain the funding for programmes for persons with disabilities in times of economic crisis* (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2011, p. 2).

Furthermore:

> ***The Committee reiterates that denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination and that the duty to provide reasonable accommodation is immediately applicable and not subject to progressive realization*** (Ibid., p. 6).

In September 2012 the CRPD Committee issued its Concluding Observations regarding compliance by Hungary. The Committee stated:

> *The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party has set deadlines for fulfilling the provisions of the law for accessibility of […] educational […] services. […] However, the Committee is concerned that the […] deadlines have not been […] met and that there are initiatives to postpone them further. The Committee is also concerned about the financial challenges* (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2012, p. 3).

> ***The Committee calls upon the State party to allocate sufficient resources for the development of an inclusive education system for children with disabilities*** (Ibid., p. 6).

Finally, in its Concluding Observations regarding Austria's performance, the CRPD Committee stated:

> *The Committee is concerned that progress towards inclusive education in Austria is stagnant. […] The Committee recommends that greater efforts be made to support students with disabilities in all areas of inclusive education from kindergarten to secondary school* (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2013, p. 6).

The CRPD Committee does not have the power to enforce its observations. However, its reports carry a lot of moral suasion, provide useful ammunition for civil society advocates and also are often influential in court decisions, even in countries which have not ratified the Convention[1]. Similarly, although the Optional Protocol to the CRPD authorises the CRPD Committee 'to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation' (United Nations, 2006b, Article 1), and most countries in Europe have ratified the Protocol, the Committee can examine the complaint and make recommendations to the State, but those recommendations are not binding.

In addition to the CRPD, CRC and International Covenants on Civil and Political and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, there are other international human rights mechanisms that lend weight to the right to inclusive education. These include the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe, 1950); the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's Convention against Discrimination in Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1960); its Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994); and the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education (United Nations, 2007). Also, in 2014 the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will release its thematic study on the right to inclusive education[2].

While governments have accepted the above-mentioned documents, none of them in isolation will help a child who has a disability, but who is excluded, to participate in inclusive education. However, the ever-increasing commitments to inclusion are serving as tools in court cases which *do* have the power to enforce remedies.

Probably the most famous litigation on the right not to be discriminated against in education is the United States (US) case of Brown vs. Board of Education[3], which decided that 'separate but equal' education was unconstitutional. Families of children with disabilities have seen the courts as a vehicle to force schools to accept

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[1] See for example Matter of Damaris L., 38 Misc.3d 570; 956 N.Y.S.2d 848; 2012 N.Y. Misc. LEXIX 5844 (NY Cty. 2012)(Glen,J.), in which the judge upheld the principle of supported decision-making as opposed to substitute decision-making (i.e. guardianship), as guaranteed by article 12 of the CRPD, despite the fact that the United States is not a party to the Convention.
[2] The report has since been released and is available at:
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/Pages/ThematicStudies.aspx
[3] Brown vs. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) http://brownvboard.org/ (Last accessed 21 January 2014)

their children in regular classes (Inclusion International, 2009), but no case dealing with disability has yet had the weight or impact of the Brown decision.

Children from Roma communities are another group that has been excluded from regular education in Europe. There has now been a series of cases before the European Court of Human Rights, which collectively have established that discrimination on the basis of race is illegal in Europe, and placement of Roma children in special education amounts to discrimination[4]. From the perspective of many disability rights activists, the cumulative weakness of these cases is that they do not challenge the appropriateness of the existence of separate schools for children with intellectual disabilities – they simply say it is inappropriate to place Roma children there.

Judgements in disability rights litigation, both in Europe and elsewhere, have found that the lack of proper supports for inclusion of children with disabilities is discrimination, but the remedies ordered have been weak (for example, that the education and finance ministries should resolve the issue of lack of resources[5]) or non-existent[6]. The decision in the Moore case[7] is particularly important because the Supreme Court of Canada found that Jeffrey Moore needed to be compared to other regular students, rather than to other students with disabilities, in line with the repeated words in the CRPD, 'on an equal basis with others'. Unfortunately, it took 15 years for Jeffrey's case to reach the Supreme Court, so he had completed his education (in a private school) and was successfully working by the time the decision came down, so it did not directly benefit him. Disability rights advocates are

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[4]See Horvath and Kiss vs. Hungary, ECtHR, 2013; DH and others vs. the Czech Republic, ECtHR [GC], 2008; Orsus and others vs. Croatia, ECtHR, 2008; and Sampanis vs. Greece, ECtHR, 2008

[5]H.C.J. 2599/00 Yated – Non-Profit Organization for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome vs. The Ministry of Education (14.8.02), Israel, 2002, http://elyon1.court.gov.il/files_eng/00/990/025/L12/00025990.l12.htm (Last accessed 21 January 2014)

[6]See also Piedad Cristina Peña, on behalf of María Alejanda Villa vs. Enitad Promotora de Salud (EPS) Coomeva. File T-2.500.563; Council of Europe, European Committee of Social Rights Decision on the Merits, Complaint No. 13/2002, Autism Europe vs. France, 2003, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/complaints/CC13Merits_en.pdf (Last accessed 21 January 2014); Council of Europe, European Committee of Social Rights Decision on the Merits, Complaint No.41/2007, Mental Disability Rights Advocacy Centre (MDAC) vs. Bulgaria, 2008, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/complaints/CC41Merits_en.pdf (Last accessed 21 January 2014); Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability vs. Government of the Republic of South Africa and Another (2011 (5) SA 87 (WCC)) [2010] ZAWCHC 544; 18678/2007 (11 November 2010), http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2010/544.html (Last accessed 21 January 2014)

[7]Supreme Court of Canada Moore vs. British Columbia (Education) 2012 SCC [2012] 3 S.C.R.360, http://www.scc-csc.gc.ca/case-dossier/info/sum-som-eng.aspx?cas=34041 (Last accessed 21 January 2014)

optimistic that the growing awareness of the CRPD will lead to stronger judgements in the future and they are constantly on the lookout for promising cases.

Even without strong jurisprudence, the right to an inclusive education has gained momentum. The CRPD clearly articulates that advancing this right requires a shift from thinking only about the special supports required by a student with a disability, to a focus on overhauling education systems. Most education systems that have attempted to comply with the obligation to educate students with special educational needs have done so by developing special programmes targeted at different groups of students. The more 'special' groups identified, the more programmes created. The CRPD poses the challenge of overhauling education systems in a way that will guarantee that individuals receive the supports they need, but within a system based on universal design for learning that applies to **all** students.

Although rights are supposed to be enforceable, dilemmas occur in implementation. In particular with respect to economic and social rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights allows for 'progressive realization' according to the State's resources (OHCHR, 1976a, Article 14). There is an underlying assumption that conditions will continue to improve. Yet what happens in times of economic recession and budget reductions? How can progress be made? What are the implications for the right to non-discrimination? Who determines what is in the best interest of the child – parents or professionals? How can these sometimes competing rights and responsibilities be reconciled?

Let's look at these dilemmas one by one. With regard to best interest, Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees that 'The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State' (United Nations, 1948, Article 16). It also recognises the right of the family 'to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children' (Ibid., Article 26). The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises 'the evolving capacities of the child' (United Nations, 1989, Article 14). Particularly in the case of children with intellectual disabilities, the family is the unit that provides on-going lifetime support (Inclusion International, 2006). Families have the right to choose within the options that are permitted by law. This means that if special and segregated options exist, the family has the right to choose them. However, while Article 24 of the CRPD does not specifically prohibit segregated options, it makes it clear that there is a right to be included. Therefore, if parents opt for inclusion it must be provided, and no educational professional has the right to say that it would be in the child's best interests to be in a special setting. Likewise, as children mature, they should have an increased say in where they go to school where options exist.

Another dilemma is posed by the provision in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which allows for 'progressive realization' (OHCHR, 1976a, Article 14). States often use this argument as a defence for not ensuring respect for rights because of lack of resources. However, as noted in the comments by the CRPD Committee cited above, 'progressive realization' does not apply to discrimination. Financial limitations are real, but to achieve inclusive systems both the global budget and the entire cohort of eligible students must be considered. It is clearly discriminatory to say that students with disabilities cannot be included in a system because there are not enough resources to support their inclusion. In fact, the reason there are not enough resources to support quality inclusion is often that resources are divided and significant amounts are directed to special programmes for particular groups of students. Re-directing these resources – and the students – into the regular system provides a larger pool of resources which can be used for the benefit of all students.

A final dilemma is one of quantity vs. quality. Is it more important to improve the quality of education for those students currently in school or to use resources to expand the number benefitting from education? From a human-rights perspective, there is no question that continuing to exclude some children from education, or from the regular education system, is discrimination and needs immediate rectification.

I often use a story to illustrate this last point.

My father grew up in the Great Depression. His family did not have a lot of money, but they knew that every Sunday evening the family would sit down together for a delicious meal. One Sunday, while the chicken was roasting in the oven, the doorbell rang and some cousins arrived for an unexpected visit. Of course my grandmother invited them in, hoping that they would leave in time for her to serve dinner to her family. She could smell the chicken as the skin got nice and brown. She waited, hoping the chicken would not get overdone, but the cousins could smell it too, and they stayed in their seats. Finally, my grandmother invited them to stay for dinner and they gladly accepted. Unfortunately, there was only one chicken, so as my father and his brothers walked to the table, my grandmother whispered to them that when the platter of chicken was passed around they should say they weren't hungry so that there would be enough for the cousins to eat.

My father and his brothers dutifully passed the platter of chicken around the table and said they weren't hungry. Then they sat and watched as their cousins enjoyed every morsel, licking their fingers so they wouldn't miss a bit. But they knew that my grandmother had also baked an apple pie, and they waited for dessert to be served. After the empty plates had been cleared, my grandmother carried in the pie, placed

it on the table with a flourish, and said, 'Now, anyone who wasn't hungry enough for the main course can't have dessert'.

Unfortunately, that's the story of too many people who have a disability. First they don't get the main course of education, health care and other supports, and then they can't get jobs, can't earn a decent income, and can't live in their own homes – the desserts that most people enjoy.

Now if my grandmother had known the cousins were coming, instead of roasting the chicken she could have made a chicken soup and had enough for everyone. When I told this story in Mexico, one mother suggested that my grandmother could have made tacos. My grandmother had never heard of tacos, but the point is, everyone can figure out how to use what they have without excluding anyone.

Using existing resources in innovative ways is a message contained in the recent Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which calls for *transformative* change to eliminate poverty worldwide (United Nations, 2013). The report also stresses the need for equity and leaving no-one behind. However, the draft goals, targets and indicators contained in their report run the risk of continuing to exclude students with disabilities. There is a huge gap between the Panel's recognition of the need to respect human rights through its focus on equity, and its view of education, which lacks an emphasis on the need for transformative change in education to support inclusion.

Focusing on the five key messages of the *Inclusive Education in Europe* conference – as early as possible; inclusive education benefits all; highly qualified professionals; support systems and funding mechanisms; and reliable data – can all contribute to the kind of transformation that will ensure that the rights of students in Europe are respected and that inclusive education is promoted. However, achieving the recommendations contained in these messages will require leadership from the highest levels. Special educators alone cannot achieve inclusive education. It will require commitment from ministers of education, their ministerial colleagues, the entire education system, families, and organisations of persons working together. Concentrating on the conference's key messages is a good place to start.

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AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

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Regardless of whether a child develops special needs over time or has them from birth, research clearly indicates that the sooner special needs are detected and tended to, the greater the impact of services. A core finding from inter-disciplinary research into early childhood development and intervention is that:

> *the course of development can be altered in early childhood by effective interventions that change the balance between risk and protection, thereby shifting the odds in favour of more adaptive outcomes* (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000, p. 4).

Thus, for both the quality of care to children and the rate of return on investment, timely action is crucial.

Success or failure in achieving timely action hinges on many factors, but three processes in particular are highly influential for enabling children's needs to be addressed as early as possible: detection and assessment; intervention; and support. This contribution's purpose is to clarify key considerations related to facilitating each of these processes – detection and assessment; intervention; and support. In addition, barriers and enablers related to each process are also discussed. The paper concludes with recommendations for action at the nexus of research, policy and practice.

Early detection and assessment

Key considerations related to detection and assessment

Early detection and assessment of children's special needs are important for multiple reasons. First, the detection of special needs at a young age helps caregivers by describing and (sometimes) explaining characteristics about a child; this provides validation to caregivers who have been concerned, and can raise awareness in those who may not have noticed or understood a child's special needs. Second, formal identification of special needs can open up pathways to services that may help the child directly (e.g. learning resources), indirectly (e.g. parental support) or both. Third, understanding a child's abilities and needs can serve formative goals, such as shaping learning trajectories or setting priorities in therapies.

Barriers and enablers related to detection and assessment

Several barriers related to detection and assessment have been described in literature. For example, it is easier to identify risk factors than it is to identify at-risk children. Experts note that particularly children whose developmental problems are more subtle – though often quite serious – tend to remain undetected until learning and behavioural problems arise at school (Glascoe, 2000; Williams and Holmes, 2004). This is due to both the fact that subtle problems are more difficult to detect, and that screening and referral mechanisms are not always optimal. Furthermore, high-quality screening tools are not available for all areas requiring treatment (Al-Qabandi, Gorter and Rosenbaum, 2011; Guralnick, 2005).

At the same time, it is important to note research on enabling factors related to detection and assessment. Absolutely essential is the fact that routine surveillance has been shown to work (Tebruegge, Nandini and Ritchie, 2004). In so doing, recent literature has emphasised that parents' knowledge is very helpful and could be used more in many cases (Williams and Holmes, 2004). Additionally, enabling research is that which shows the clear added value for children, including an increased likelihood of graduating from high school, living independently and obtaining employment, and decreased criminality and teen pregnancy (Barnett and Escobar, 1990; Gomby et al., 1995). The fact that early intervention benefits not only the children themselves, but society at large is also an extremely powerful enabler. According to Glascoe (2000), society saves between £18,000 and £60,000 for each at-risk or disabled child who receives two years of early intervention prior to starting school.

Early intervention

Key considerations related to early intervention

Early intervention refers to rapidly responding to the developing special needs of children at any age, but when attending to the special needs of very young children, the term 'early childhood intervention' (ECI) is often used. ECI is defined as:

> *a composite of services/provisions for very young children and their families, provided at their request at a certain time in a child's life, covering any action undertaken when a child needs special support to:*
>
> – *Ensure and enhance her/his personal development;*
>
> – *Strengthen the family's own competences, and*
>
> – *Promote the social inclusion of the family and the child* (European Agency, 2010, p. 7).

For example, Hemmeter, Fox, Jack and Broyles (2007) described essential elements of a programme-wide model of positive behaviour support in preschool that reflects an understanding of the needs of young children and the unique characteristics of early childhood settings. Key considerations related to providing early interventions include the availability, quality and quantity of services across circumstances (e.g. urban/rural regions, high/low income).

Barriers and enablers related to early intervention

Barriers to providing early intervention that are well described in literature include the availability of services and awareness of services. However, equally important are barriers that relate to the human condition, including emotion (e.g. parental denial or shame concerning a child's condition), inertia (e.g. lacking a sense of urgency leads to no action being taken) or insecurity (e.g. not knowing where to turn or to whom). When services take a long time to be accessed, are not offered in the language of the family in need, or clash with cultural or religious beliefs, then they are also less likely to be used.

The converse is also true: multi-lingual, low-threshold contact, followed by swift initiation of action, constitute powerful enablers of early intervention. For example, Williams, Perrigo, Banda, Matic and Goldfarb (2013) investigated barriers to accessing services for children under 3 years of age presenting with language delays and behavioural difficulties, including language barriers for Spanish-speaking families. Their study revealed that reaching an attentive, live person speaking the family's home language in a phone call, and obtaining an appointment by the end of the phone call, yielded a significant influence on the use of services.

Support

Key considerations related to support

The presence or absence of *support* can powerfully influence if, how and when detection, assessment and intervention actions take place. Here, support refers to the human and material resources provided to caregivers for the purposes of facilitating them in their role vis-à-vis the child. Parental support can take the form of information and exchange with peers or professionals, while teacher support may include co-operation with professionals in or outside of the school. For example, Salisbury, Crawford, Marlowe and Husband (2003) successfully piloted an inter-agency planning project to support parents by co-ordinating the information about and delivery of services for families whose children are served by multiple agencies. Also, Duda, Clarke, Fox and Dunlap (2008) implemented a support programme for siblings in the home environment, which proved quite promising for reducing aggregate levels of challenging behaviour within the families involved. While

support may be focused on a child's immediate concerns (e.g. competencies to be developed this week or this year), support is also essential for anticipating and enabling appropriate and smooth transitions (e.g. into formal schooling, from one school to another, from schooling to employment). Legislation has taken steps to support the families of young children with special needs (e.g. Trohanis, 2008), but challenges remain.

Barriers and enablers related to support

One barrier to implementing support for caregivers of children with special needs is the simple fact that it is extremely difficult. In an investigation concerning an inter-agency transition agreement, Wischnowski, Fowler and McCollum (2000) conclude that doing so constitutes a complex, multi-dimensional and sequential process. The lack of established, clear, measurable objectives presents another barrier. While these are quite common in programmes focusing on at-risk children, they tend to be rather rare in programmes focusing on support (McDonnell, Brownell and Wolery, 2001). This may be due to the fact that both tools and a culture of measuring support outcomes have historically been lacking.

However, despite the barriers, there is evidence of positive change. The importance of outcome measures for support mechanisms is becoming more widely appreciated and tools are beginning to be developed. For example, the Family Quality of Life (FQOL) scale is an outcome measure of intervention effectiveness that has proved to be promising for use with both fathers and mothers (Wang et al., 2006). Similarly, accountability levels are becoming more widely understood. For example, Bailey (2001) proposed a three-level approach to understanding accountability of support to families of children in early intervention and preschool programmes: (a) providing the legally required services for families; (b) providing services that are considered recommended; and (c) achieving certain outcomes as a result of working with families. He argues for policy changes that could facilitate the evaluation of parent involvement and family support efforts. Furthermore, research clearly indicates that both teachers and families want support (McConnell, 2001; McDonnell, Brownell and Wolery, 2001). Additionally, communities want to see people using the services that they provide (Schwartz and Rodriguez, 2001).

Towards an integrated cycle of early intervention

Interaction between key processes

The key processes discussed above (detection and assessment; intervention; and support) are all related to one another. They also include multiple sub-components, as the descriptions suggested. When viewed together, they form an on-going cycle,

with an ideal sequence – although the harsh reality is that the activities described do not always occur in the first place, and when they do occur, they often do not follow the ideal sequence.

Figure 1 shows how the key processes and their sub-components together form an ideal sequence. In this figure, detection and assessment are represented as two separate stages on the right hemisphere (monitoring and detection, and assessment and planning, respectively). On the left hemisphere are the two sub-components related to intervention: the intervention itself, which inherently includes explicit observation and, where needed, adjustment. It also includes measurement of its accompanying outcomes (evaluation) and re-assessment of the approach (reflection). Each of the activities in the four quarters is shaped by interactions with the others, as well as various support mechanisms. Finally, these processes do not take place in a vacuum, but against the backdrop of policy, practice and research – each of which affords opportunities and sets limits on what is possible.

Figure 1: Interaction between key processes of early intervention

The roles of research, policy and practice

As shown in Figure 1, the key processes of early intervention relate to each other, but are also influenced by policy, practice and research. While they are inextricably tied together, the actors, mechanisms and reward systems within each field often contribute to more isolated systems, instead of interacting ones. If the quality of

early intervention is to improve, work is especially required at existing intersections of research, policy and practice. This requires effort from each system to establish heightened alignment and increased impact of interventions. Specifically, it requires policies that fund connected (as opposed to isolated) research and development work, involving practitioners and researchers within communities and schools. It requires practitioners that are committed to sharing their work outside of everyday practice, with other stakeholders (e.g. researchers, policy-makers) as well as researchers who value practical and usable knowledge alongside or as part of developing theoretical understanding.

Toward mutually beneficial policy, practice and research interactions

For over a decade, there have been increasing calls for socially robust and relevant knowledge production (Gibbons, 1999, 2000). This means that researchers in all fields should be producing knowledge that can reliably impact upon society at large. More recently, attention has also been given not only to the use of scientific knowledge *for* educational practice, but also to *how* it is produced (Levin, 2013; Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010). Specifically, there is growing attention on how researchers and practitioners can collaboratively bear the responsibility for both producing and using relevant knowledge in education. In the context of early intervention, this means that attention must be given to not only producing knowledge that is relevant and usable *for* those who provide services, but that increasingly, such new knowledge should be constructed *in collaboration with* those who provide early intervention services. To enable this, policies are needed that support research-practice interactions, e.g. through integrated funding mechanisms, and alignment with the culture of researchers (e.g. work in practice is valued in performance reviews) and of practitioners (e.g. organisations allocate time for participation in research projects). In short, positioning mutually-beneficial policy, practice and research interactions requires focused attention at the nexus of these three areas, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Positioning mutually-beneficial policy, practice and research interactions

In addition to focused attention, convincing descriptions of mutually beneficial policy, practice and research interactions are also needed. Voogt, McKenney, Pareja Roblin, Ormel and Pieters (2012) conducted a systematic review of literature to analyse how interactions manifest themselves in three forms of research-practice relationships: linear, context-focused, and interactive (Nutley, Walter and Davis, 2007). First, Research Development Diffusion (RDD) projects feature a linear approach, using scientific research to develop educational products, and disseminating these to a large audience. Second, Design-Based Research (DBR) is an iterative, context-focused approach in which researchers and practitioners develop and evaluate solutions for educational problems. Third, Teacher Knowledge Communities (TKCs) are based on collaboration between teachers, facilitated by researchers, aiming to improve practice. The analyses concerned research-practice interactions and focused on: actors (researchers, teachers, intermediaries) and their roles; knowledge utilisation, where we distinguish between formal knowledge (evidence-based knowledge), knowledge derived from data (evidence-informed knowledge) and knowledge derived from personal experience (colloquial evidence); and knowledge generation, where we differentiate between contributions to formal (scientific) knowledge and contributions to the specific project (local knowledge). This study's findings provide evidence for the value of supporting research-practice interactions, as well as recommendations for ways of supporting specific types. The studies reviewed provide inspiring examples of three differing types.

Recommendations

While the study described above provides useful starting points, an even more relevant contribution could come from initiating research specifically targeting *early intervention* research-practice interactions, and policies that enable them. This could focus on multiple fields – not just education (as in the example above) – but

also health, child development, psychology and social services. Ideally, multiple studies would, together, portray existing work in relation to the processes described above: monitoring and detection; assessment and planning; intervention and observation; evaluation and reflection; and support mechanisms. If these investigations were well documented and expertly conducted, they could serve multiple purposes, each of which can contribute to making early intervention a reality for more children. Such studies could:

- clearly demonstrate the *added value* of aligning policy-practice-research work;

- establish quality estimates of *societal costs* due to isolated (not co-ordinated) work; and

- document convincing examples of *specific approaches*.

Taken together, such findings could substantially broaden the evidence base that informs policy, shapes practice and deepens research-based understanding.

In addition to studying previous work at the research-practice-policy nexus, work is also needed to document, describe and explain new initiatives. Understanding innovation is notoriously difficult and it is extremely complex in the field of early intervention, due to the variety of contexts, actors, professional reward systems and disciplinary cultures. At the same time, such understanding is urgently needed to drive policy-making and programme development that can be well conceived, feasibly implemented and ultimately experienced at scale in ways that yield meaningful change for children with special needs and their families. Collaboration between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers can also contribute to creating new knowledge about early intervention innovation. McKenney and Reeves (2012) identify four characteristics of innovations that are likely to be implemented successfully. Each of these warrants attention in seeking to understand early intervention initiatives. Specifically, successful innovations tend to be: value-added, clear, compatible and tolerant; each of these is described briefly below.

Value-added innovations offer something better than what is already in place. Similar to Rogers' notion of relative advantage (2003), the potential benefits of value-added innovations visibly outweigh the investments required to yield them. In relation to the discussion above, value-added interventions refer to measurable positive changes for children with special needs and/or the lives of those for whom support systems are targeted.

Clear innovations enable participants to easily envision their involvement. Innovations may be clear through high levels of explicitness (Fullan and Pomfret, 1977), through a priori specifications of procedures (Doyle and Ponder, 1978)

and/or interactive mechanisms whereby developers and users co-define (elements of) the innovation. For example, screening and referral systems that are easy to understand and use are clear.

Compatible innovations are congruent with existing values, cultures, practices and beliefs (Doyle and Ponder, 1978; Fullan and Pomfret, 1977; Rogers, 2003; Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon and Byers, 2002). They are still innovative, but the innovations and/or their underlying assumptions do not violate or reject the fundamental concerns and principles of those involved. Such fundamental convictions might include valuing parental knowledge or ensuring that untested treatments will in any case do no harm. *Compatible* innovations are also aligned with non-changeable aspects of the educational system, such as assessment frameworks or policies (McKenney, Nieveen and van den Akker, 2006). For example, municipal funding for young children's special needs programmes may come from health care budgets or from educational budgets; some creative programmes have found ways to align portions of work with multiple funding bodies, so that the whole innovation is truly greater than the sum of its parts.

Finally, *tolerant* innovations are those that 'degrade gracefully' (Walker, 2006), as opposed to yielding 'lethal mutations' (Brown and Campione, 1996) during the natural variation in enactment that inevitably comes along with differing contexts, resources, expertise, acceptance levels and so on. Tolerance refers to how precisely core components must be enacted for the innovation to be true to its goals, and how well an innovation withstands local adaptations. Tolerant early interventions are those that withstand (and possibly even invite) productive adaptations, especially when in the hands of reflective professionals (e.g. therapists, teachers, doctors).

Finally, whether based on past work or new innovations, investigation and documentation of innovations must meet certain criteria to be of value. Specifically, the work must attend to the values of each audience. For *researchers*, such investigation must adhere to scientific norms and be documented in a transparent fashion. For *practitioners*, the added value of innovations and the links with their everyday practice must be made explicit convincingly. For *policy-makers*, the evidence must make use of reliable quality indicators and include financial implications in order to use findings to lobby for policies that fund cross-cutting interaction.

Closing comments

This contribution has outlined key processes that are crucial to achieving early intervention, as well as barriers to and enablers of each. The model shown in Figure 1 illustrates sub-processes and the relationships between each element: monitoring

and detection; assessment and planning; intervention and observation; evaluation and reflection; and support mechanisms. Because each of these is influenced by policy, practice and research, it was argued that work on early intervention cannot be conceived of in a vacuum, but rather must take these contexts into account. A call was made for more work to focus on the interaction and alignment of goals at the nexus of research, policy and practice. After giving examples of research-practice interactions facilitated by policies, recommendations for realising this in the context of early intervention were given. The recommendations pertained to: previous work showcasing research-practice-policy synergies; new work of this kind; characteristics of innovations that warrant attention; and the kinds of evidence that are valued by differing kinds of stakeholders. The importance and societal benefit of early intervention for the development of young children with special needs is convincingly documented. What is most urgently needed now is work to inform how early intervention – including the sub-components described – can best be tackled. As with early intervention itself, time is of the essence. The sooner we commit to and take action to understand and improve early intervention, the more children, families and society stand to benefit.

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FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES AND DIMENSIONS OF INCLUSION IN SWEDEN AND EUROPE. HOW DOES INCLUSION BENEFIT ALL?

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Preamble

In the field of education research all over Europe, there seems to be a tendency to 'speak' about inclusion. However, in the practical context of schools the tendency seems to be towards both a vision and ambition of 'including all', while there remains more diagnosis and placement of pupils in special groups (Hansen and Qvortrup, 2013; Skoglund, 2013; Ström, 2013; Nes, 2013). Statements such as 'inclusion benefits all' are frequent, but what do they really mean? This article will examine the tensions and challenges underlying the 'rhetoric' and focus on the 'how question'. This means trying to elaborate on which questions should be asked, what preliminary answers we have, which qualities of schools and education need to be defined and what is crucial in order to attain the defined qualities and outcomes in practice.

Introduction

The following 'learning experience' is used to illustrate the complexity of inclusion. In 2003, a middle-range municipality seeking support in creating 'inclusive schools' requested 'counselling help' from the National Institute of Special Pedagogy (Skoglund and Larsson, 2004). The municipality's education management group's stated intention in the spring of 2003 was: 'We want to include all pupils now'. A development group was appointed and the first question my colleague and I asked was: 'How do you know that everyone wants to include all pupils now?' The answer was: 'Well, actually we don't know that, but please evaluate our work so far concerning those in need of special support'. When asked if they had any methods to investigate the pertinent issues, they suggested the use of a focus group method.

From then on, we tried to guide them to investigate as much diversity as possible. They picked out 17 different functions in the system, from politicians to day-care providers in their own homes, and asked them about 'inclusion'. The result was quite 'scattered', with 17 rather different experiences of 'What are the challenges of inclusion' and 'What do you mean by and think about inclusion'. The management group concluded that they could not have one single inclusion process, but rather that they needed to meet 17 different political and professional needs!

Through this and other learning experiences about a common tendency to simplify the inclusion process, this paper will state that inclusion is about a transformative change process where it is necessary to see, understand and handle human – and especially political and professional – complexity, uncertainty and learning. If 'inclusion' is continuously treated as a technical and instrumental question of change, very little will happen!

Tensions and challenges

Coming from a technical perspective of change, human shortcomings and gaps in our current capability to organise education and schools are apparent. To understand the current challenges in Sweden, and also in other European countries (European Agency, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c), we need to accept the 'fundamental tension' between three main factors.

Firstly, most European societies are experiencing a *growing diversity* in population and therefore also in schools and classrooms. This includes greater cultural, ethnic, gender and personal (through more medical and psychological differential diagnosis) diversity. Our understanding of 'diversity' has expanded. Secondly, regarding education, as least in Sweden and some Scandinavian countries, since 2010/2011 the *steering documents* have been much clearer that 'schools, principals and teaching' will manage to 'meet' all those diverse needs. Thirdly, and most importantly, every nation has its own *tradition* of 'education, school and teaching'. Thus the question, politically and professionally, is 'how to change tradition'.

Sweden serves as an example to illustrate this challenge (Persson, 2001, p. 13): in the mid-1950s, approximately 8 percent of the population aged between 16 and 19 participated in upper-secondary education. In 2013, approximately 100% participated. This raises the need to 'mind the gap': has the Swedish system (or other educational systems) adapted to the additional 92%, with the potentially increased diversity this brings? The answer is definitely 'no'. The question about tensions and challenges can be stated as: 'Are our management, structures, processes and competencies in schools in balance with this challenge?'

It is important to recognise that most people responsible for and in schools are engaged in their work and want to 'do good', or to put it another way, they do not consciously do the wrong things. In the field of inclusion, it is common to agree to include all, but this value-laden answer is not enough and does not solve the challenges in the real world.

The real complexity that is encountered in school development is the need to change 'heavy' human constructs 'guarded by tradition', in terms of living persons, institutions, organisations and routines.

The questions relating to school development and, in this case, development of the capability to include can be stated as follows:

- How to break traditions that do not meet needs?

- How to combat fear, uncertainty and insecurity?

- How to support isolated principals?

- How to create adaptive teaching?

- How to meet complex needs, such as people with a neuropsychiatric disability?

These questions suggest that it is not a matter of 'technical change within the frame', but rather a matter of 'transformative change of systems' (compare Hjörne and Säljö, 2008). As long as the focus is on *integration* of pupils within a given frame (the space perspective), the technical view will continue, but if the matter is *inclusion* (the system adaptive perspective), it is a question of how to develop a school system and a society that *deals with its own members in a coherent, resilient, community building, developing and sustainable way*.[8]

Promising findings from the Agency's 'Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education' project

The Agency's 'Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education' project has:

- conducted a survey in 28 nations on factors such as vision, law, organisation and funding;

- produced a review of the current international research on inclusion;

- examined five strategically selected cases of 'successful' change processes moving towards more inclusive practice in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Valetta (Malta), Vienna (Austria), Flensburg (Germany) and Essunga (Sweden).

In sum, this information and the analysis shows some interesting 'lacks' and 'gaps' in our handling of inclusion so far. It seems quite clear that we need more **CAPABILITY** in terms of:

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[8] This type of challenge is not new. As an example, consider the challenge in Austria in the 1910s and '20s, when new research evidence about the brain (Bühler, 1931) showed that 'children have a brain with its own motivation'. Leading researchers, such as Elsa Köhler (2009), stated that a move from the 'schoolification of life' to 'activity pedagogy in schools' is needed, which has at its core the idea of the school meeting the needs of different children with different backgrounds by addressing child curiosity. This was probably a necessity in the Wiener Schulreforme of 1919, when working class children were supposed to be 'integrated' or 'included' in the Austrian school system (Bühler, 1931). Today we can frame the challenge as 'differentiating pupils' vs. 'differentiating the teaching' (Tetler, 2012; Nilholm and Göransson, 2013).

- Context awareness; what are the challenges?

- Correspondence between vision, law and implementation

- Conceptual clarity

- Continuum of support

- Collaboration

- Consciousness of qualities to offer.

The first crucial capability factor for change is *context awareness*– that is, the ability to focus on *how it really is* by investigating and analysing: which pupils are we unable to support in the current situation and why is that the case?

The second capability factor is about creating *correspondence* between vision, law and implementation to develop inclusive schools. The lack of correspondence creates a 'blame game' where everybody can take the role of 'I am not satisfied with…', instead of a joint community operation. The PISA study (Skolverket, 2013) shows this emerging blame game with its dominant features: anxiety, fear and panic, leading to a situation with 'all actors in'. Whatever long/short, deep/narrow, up-to-date/old, pick-pocket beliefs/evidence-based beliefs, responsible/non-responsible acting takes place, all 'impressions' and 'expressions' seem relevant. In no other societal field does this 'inflation of experts' occur. Why is this the case in a field that – among all fields – should be guided by 'enlightened minds' within our educational institutions?

Here is not the place for elaborated explanations, but the example (in Footnote 8) gives us some understanding. The western and European world faces huge challenges. The world has become more complex and more diversified through globalisation, migration and the evolution of categorisation of humans. Maybe the 'standard operating procedures' (Allison, 1971) of European nations' handling of the concepts of 'learning' and 'enlightenment' are out-dated. According to the PISA investigation (Skolverket, 2013), it seems that Europe and even the US are losing their 'educational grip' to several Asian societies, but it may equally be a matter of the underlying tension between the Scholastic and Socratian views on learning and knowledge. The question seems to be two-fold:

- *How does a society organise its educational system in order to see and understand its members well enough to provide 'schools' and 'teaching' that develop everyone to a level of self-sufficiency that allows them to contribute?*

- *How does a society take care of and develop the talents of all of its members from early childhood up to adulthood, thereby preventing exclusion and consequent negative outcomes?*

The third capability factor is *conceptual clarity*. Any talk about inclusion so far has been mainly in political and value-laden terms. Stakeholders have stated that 'inclusion is good' or 'inclusion is bad' on many occasions, without defining the distinct qualities of either 'inclusion' or 'special groups'. Many researchers have already come to this conclusion (Persson and Persson, 2012, p. 31; Nilholm and Göransson, 2013, p. 72; Hicks-Monroe, 2011; Haug, 2012), emphasising that inclusion is not just a question of being 'placed' in a mainstream school, but rather is about the teachers' ability to engage with pupils with a diversity of support needs and enable them to participate in the community and belong to the social setting called school.

The fourth factor is about the capability to create a visible *continuum of support*. In Sweden at least, the dominant thinking is 'coloured' by a tradition of separating everyday practice (teaching and learning) and 'special education', even though the introduction of special pedagogues in the early 1990s helped to focus not just on the 'pupil in need', but also on the 'teacher in need'. It still appears that the dichotomous world is dominated by two end points of a continuum: regular, everyday teaching in the classroom and the alternative placement in a 'special group'. The steps and sequences in between those endpoints are not very well defined and developed, as shown by some articles about the current inclusion situation in the Scandinavian countries (Hansen and Qvortrup, 2013; Skoglund, 2013; Ström, 2013; Nes, 2013).

The fifth factor is the capability to *collaborate in practice* at all levels of organisation. At the leadership level there seems to be a great need for 'distributed leadership', meaning the ability to organise and share school leadership (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Ainscow and Sandhill, 2010). The Agency project outcomes suggest that, with regard to leadership for inclusion, it is not enough to have bottom-up or top-down change. Rather a 'top-involvement-process-leadership' is needed. That is a leadership that creates conditions for continuous learning in and through actual everyday practice, with a focus on improving the ability to include all pupils (Skoglund, 2013, p. 26). The third aspect of collaboration is the need for collegial work and learning by teachers, preferably also interacting with researchers and/or external counsellors (Carrington and Robinson, 2006; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Skoglund and Erkinger, 2007).

The sixth factor is a summative one: *consciousness of qualities* to offer. The five factors above shows some of the most important qualities needed in order to make transformative change towards a more inclusive school and education system. Two cases from the Agency's Organisation of Provision...' project are presented below in order to explore these ideas further.

Essunga and Flensburg show some ways forward

In the Swedish city of Essunga (European Agency, 2013a; Persson and Persson, 2012; Persson, 2012) and the German city of Flensburg (European Agency, 2013b), ways of dealing with school and societal development in terms of inclusion were examined. Both cases show a remarkable change in outcomes, from a 'miserable' situation in 2006/2007 to a situation where the schools in both cases were, by 2011, among the highest-achieving schools in their respective country. How was that possible?

Obviously each case consists of a complex web of influencing factors, but here the focus is on the main patterns shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Seven fundamental factors for transformative change

It is not just one 'tipping point' that makes it possible (Kim and Mauborgne, 2003); rather it seems that a set of seven 'tipping factors' becomes of fundamental and vital interest. Learning occurs and changes are made due to the fact that important actors responsible for and present in schools accepted the following:

1. **Reality:** In both cases a perceived 'crisis' or 'shock' initiated the processes. The outcomes in terms of goal attainment were very bad compared to others. This seems to have helped politicians, leaders and professionals to accept the common challenge. Another supporting factor was that the special pedagogue interviewed all pupils concerning their feelings about school. The summary of this work showed that many pupils did not want to be in school. These two factors helped to build the common opinion among leaders and staff: 'We need to do something, it is necessary'.

2. **Oneself as a causal factor:** The tradition when analysing problems as outlined above was to 'blame' the pupils and the parents, but through external support (counsellors and researchers) the frame of the analysis was widened

to include professionals as a main factor in explaining and understanding the poor outcomes, thereby providing the potential for change in order to secure better outcomes.

3. **The move from resource allocation to resource use:** Common acceptance of the problem and its causes does not seem to be enough, since it has long been a tradition to ask for more resources when something does not function well. In both cases, the leaders showed courage and the ability to avoid this trap, by investigating how resources could be used or organised in another way. This was mainly done by closing down special and segregated groups in Essunga and moving the pupils and special teachers into the mainstream school and teaching groups. In Flensburg, the special school became a common resource centre that would support the school and the teachers by keeping track and developing the capability of both pupils and teachers.

4. **The need for an explicit idea of school and pupils:** Linked to factor 3 and in some ways a precondition for the re-allocation of resources, it was necessary to create a new idea/vision (an alternative world in mind). This was done by the actors themselves, but with help from counselling support and the study of research.

5. **The need for change in thinking and acting:** It would probably not have been enough for the ideas/vision to be carried just by the school/community leaders. The leadership ideas had to be 'distributed' or 'shared' by the professionals carrying out teaching and support. This was achieved by enabling the professionals to relate their teaching to research, making the teaching 'visible' by working in pairs and in teams. The supporting professions were also helped to address the actual challenges in their everyday work. These components created a more collaborative climate with all stakeholders 'supporting each other' being used as a means to see, meet and teach all pupils.

6. **The need to build a stronger community of practice:** It is one thing to change to something new, but another to make it sustainable. Here the leaders showed the vital ability to create sustainable structures and processes side-by-side with the continuous development of competencies. Essunga was faced with a challenge in 2011 when the principal moved to another city. The very practical and wise action by the education department head was to split the role of principal between two people who had both been involved in the development process. One was the special pedagogue and the other a teacher who was also team co-ordinator. In both cases, the leaders realised that they could not 'relax' with the new, improved results; it was necessary to continue to reformulate and analyse the challenges and so on.

7. **Seeing professional ability to learn as fundamental for pupil learning and school innovation:** This is the essence of the development process and also the challenge for the future. When the professionals learn collegially about their pupils, their teaching really facilitates increased pupil learning. The challenge is to sustain this interest and ability.

The need for a transformative change of culture

The seven integrated tipping points tell a story – not of a simplistic technical change or a simple implementation of something new, but rather of inclusion as a matter of 'transformative change'. This, according to Chris Argyris (1991), means learning and change of the second order – a 'double-loop learning process' rather than a 'single-loop learning process'. Most managers have, through their education or in-service professional development, become more familiar with this conceptualisation. However, Argyris's work has been used mainly on an individual and organisational level and more rarely on a societal system level. His findings are, however, important on all levels, since learning on an individual level is linked to learning on a collegial and collective level (regardless of the size of group, organisation, inter-organisational network or society). This highlights that the understanding of learning, in terms of the popular idea of a 'learning organisation', is somewhat misleading. While individuals can learn and change, groups can learn collegially and change together within organisations. This may include leaders/managers who learn and change individually or with colleagues in inter-organisational networks. The same principle holds true for the societal level, for example, among politicians and/or among professionals (Skoglund, 2013; compare Schultz, 2012; Aten, Howard-Grenville and Ventresca, 2012; Zilber, 2012).

By this logic, transformative learning and change in the educational system, schools and teaching, necessarily includes both individuals and colleagues at all levels. There is no 'invisible hand' in any system and each and every person in the system is important in working to create greater understanding and the co-operative action that is fundamental to change. Every curious 'community of practice' (at all levels) is vital in order to create a capable way to meet the diversity of its members in order to build societies that constantly develop sufficient resilience to sustain their development.

The essence of these ideas is well elaborated by Argyris (1991) and Schein (1993). As everyone tries to be 'smart' by developing routines and standard operating procedures, resistance to learning and change can increase (Allison, 1971; Skoglund, Pettersson and Leivik Knowles, 1996). It is therefore a multi-level question of how to make the routine-based individual, group, organisation, inter-organisational

network or societal structure, learn and change in order to meet the needs of its members and of the whole – the common society and the common world.

This is not an easy task, since nobody owns the problem. It is about everyone and therefore there is no simple solution at hand. Statements such as 'Inclusion benefits all' are too simple. The big question is 'How?'. The examples studied in the Agency's 'Organisation of Provision...' project also give some guidance regarding the 'How' question.

How does inclusion benefit all?

Based on emerging findings from the Agency's 'Organisation of Provision...' project and some experiences and data from the work of the Swedish National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools[9], inclusion benefits all if it is:

- based on conceptual clarity;

- guided by distributed leadership;

- based on an explicit tri-focal model of support;

- focused on building capacity in everyday school work.

In short, principals benefit by developing their leadership capability; teachers develop greater resilience to meet different needs; all students benefit through increasing their capacity to learn (with/from others) and society as a whole benefits through improved/sustainable relationships.

The fundamental problem is that 'inclusion' has been treated as a 'thing'. It is not a 'thing', but a matter of transformative change, that requires learning and change by all stakeholders together in our organisations and in our society (Skoglund, 2013). Nobody is 'outside' the learning and change process. However, in order to reach this fundamental understanding, some conditions are necessary.

Firstly, conceptual clarity is needed. As long as the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' are blurred, those sceptical about the development of a society that is able to see, understand and meet the needs of all its members in a 'community' will gain ground. We will continue to have separate forms of dealing with 'different people', which cost a huge amount of money but lead to poorer outcomes.

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[9]Presented in Skoglund (2013), based on 11 years' work as a development leader and research & development co-ordinator working with the structures, processes and competencies of a national counselling agency that aims to support local schools to become better able to meet, teach and develop an education and schools for all pupils, regardless of functional ability. Furthermore, this agency responds to approximately 2,000–3,000 requests for 'help' every year, delivers approximately 150 structured courses per year and has 50 networks on different topics. It also meets with almost all school authorities every year, focusing on the questions: 'What capabilities do you have to meet needs?' and 'What support do you need from the national state?'

Secondly, society's ability to understand the benefits and cost-effectiveness of better ways to see, understand and meet its members' needs, requires a certain leadership method. Traditional 'top-down leadership' or 'bottom-up innovators' cannot meet this challenge – it is too complex. The top-down model will fail since 'everybody has their own professional will' and the bottom-up model is only effective in the short term, since the sole engaged persons will be exhausted by the complexity. Rather it seems to be a question of consistent leadership, which requires leadership that distributes the uncertainties, challenges and solutions by organising people to be a part of a team leading the enterprise. The *modus operandi* seems to be a constant dialogue and 'conceptualisation' between managers, team leaders, teams and individual professionals in order to take care of 'true learning at different levels' (in schools, municipalities and at national level). This is clearly much more difficult – but what is the alternative?

Thirdly, everybody knows that it is not just the 'problematic pupil' who is in need of 'special support' and the hard questions must be addressed:

- How are teachers best supported to fulfil their role and co-operate functionally?

- Which professional groups are in need of support in order to support others?

- How can principals best be supported in order to organise and support teachers?

- What support do local education leaders need to help and support principals to organise and support teachers?

- How can local political boards support education leaders?

- What support do national agencies and political organisations need to support local boards, heads of education, principals, leadership teams, supporting professionals and teachers?

In short, this is about a need for a true transformative change; no actor at any level can have a simple solution for the whole. It is all about systematic collaboration!

The development of a conceptual model – three fundamental dimensions and indicators of inclusion

In further analysis of the findings from the mentioned Agency project and discussions held with a range of stakeholders at a series of five country seminars, a model has been developed (Skoglund, 2013, p. 26) to support the development of 'conceptual clarity' – a necessary factor to underpin inclusive development.

This model consists of three dimensions:

- Equivalence: the school's *capability* to **see/recognise and understand** the pupils' preconditions and each individual's needs.

- Accessibility: the school's *capability* to **adapt teaching, localities and social community** from a diversity of needs.

- Participation: the school's *capability* to **stimulate pupils to '*take part*'**; learning to be lead, to lead oneself and learning to lead others (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers, 2012).

Using these ideas, it is possible to move forward and try to model the relationships between the different dimensions. It is possible to create a 'taxonomy', ranging from the logical factor of offering or not offering 'space' for a pupil, to more refined qualities of human meetings in school (Skoglund, 2013). Inclusion is defined as a continuous process of people responsible for and in schools trying to increase the capability to 'meet' and stimulate the pupil in a climate of community belonging.

The conceptual model also includes the relationship between the everyday actors – teachers and pupils – and those assigned to 'support' the development of schools, teaching and pupils ('support for school, teaching and pupil development'). This term avoids the trap of 'special' being seen as occurring alongside the everyday activity. Rather the support should be connected to the everyday activity with a focus on all three aspects: pupils learning, teachers teaching and the school as a community of learning and belonging. The building of a community of practice is addressed in the next section as a basis for the tri-focal support system.

A model for building a community of practice with leadership and support

The two main factors for building sustainable communities of practice in a system seem to be distributed leadership and a support system for everyday practice (teaching and learning). Such a support system needs to be systematic, tri-focal and organised with the structure and processes rigorously built in order to react to difficulties and shortcomings in teaching and learning, as well as to be proactive and take preventive action in the spirit of 'building a better learning place'. To do that, a single focus (pupils in need of support) is not enough. It is also necessary to focus on 'teachers in need of support to see, understand and teach all pupils' and on the 'systematic development of structures, processes and competencies'.

In developing each focus, it is important to work systematically, building on a model of development at individual, group, school and societal level (Liljeroth, Engen, Larsson, Skoglund and Öfverholm, 2011). In order to learn and change, the stakeholders in question need to participate in **formulating and analysing the challenges, their context and the conditions** in which they occur. They must do this both by themselves and with external partners. This is the fundamental analysis

mentioned above. Without that, actors tend to run towards 'easy solutions', without understanding cause and effect.

From that 'material', it is important to **define the task/idea** in order to increase precision. It is also vital **to develop an understanding of the attitudes** needed to 'better relate' to pupils and working partners. Further on, it is crucial **to develop 'good enough' concrete ways/modes of working** according to proven experiences and research. At the same time, one has to design how each individual will learn from practice in the workplace, since current knowledge is just current; in order to progress, all stakeholders need to participate in new knowledge creation through more conscious learning. A final question is **how to capture the outcomes** of new ways of being and acting. This connects the challenges, where 'income' data is captured and can be related to 'outcome' data systematically.
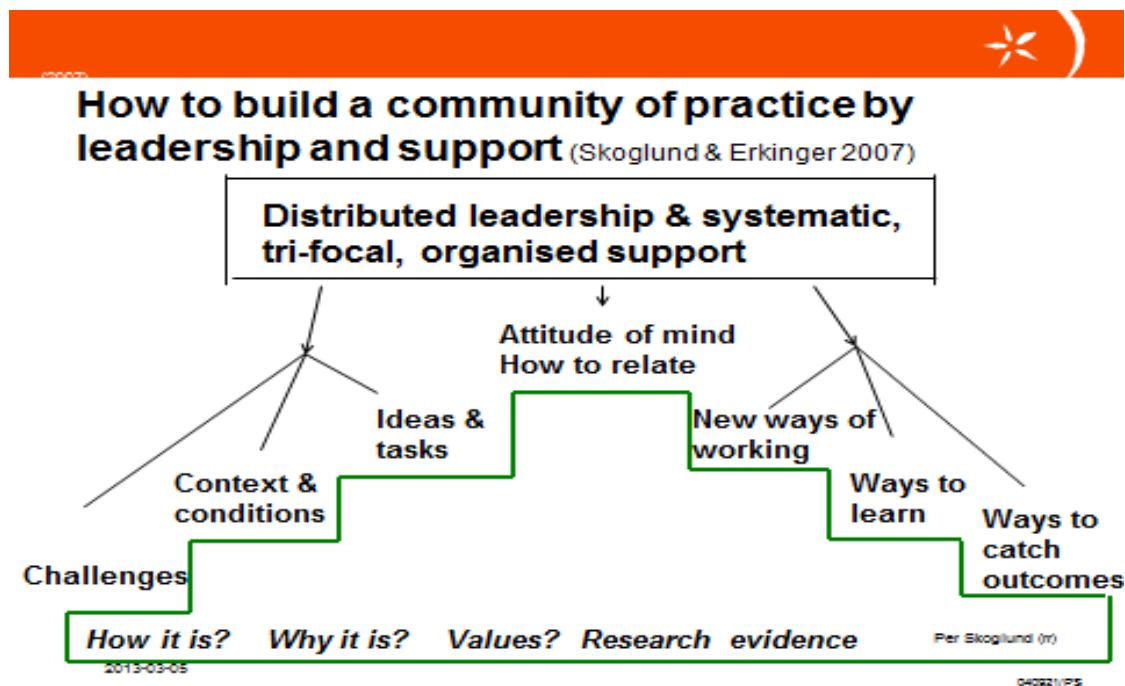
Figure 4: How to build a community of practice by leadership and support

Three inter-connected continua of the tri-focal support system

As mentioned above, it is important to elaborate visible and workable continua. Here three possible foci are visualised:

- A: Pupil in school
- B: Everyday teaching
- C: Systematic structure, process and competence development.

In the first continuum (focus on the pupil), the class teacher is the first to get to know new pupils and therefore a dialogue with other teachers is important in order

not to be 'imprisoned' by one's own perception. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is important to see and hear the child (and the parent) and ask them how they feel about school, learning and peers.

If the teacher and the child have difficulty understanding something, the teacher can turn to a 'specialist' (i.e. a special pedagogue) for help in formulating an individual plan (which corresponds with the pupil's support needs and the teaching/support mode). It is then a case of trying to teach/support and observe how the plan works, adapting it as necessary. If this is insufficient, the teacher should receive support from others (Focus B continuum).

Create "continuum" of support: Focus A "Pupil situation"

	Meet	**See/Hear**	**Understand**	**Indiv. Plan**	**Teach**	
"Pupil Situation"	• Ask teacher	• Ask child • Ask parents	• Ask research or specialists	• Needs • Teaching mode	• Observe • Adapt	**Level B continuum**

Per Skoglund SPSM

Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten
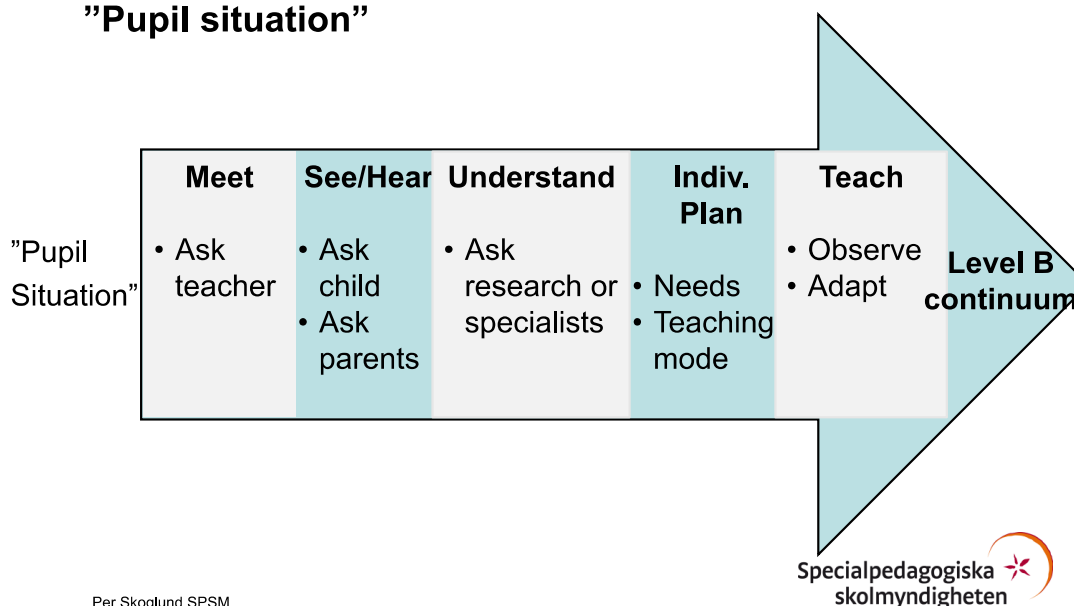
Figure 5: Focus A: Pupil situation continuum

In the Focus B continuum, the first step is for teachers to have the righ to ask for help and then quickly receive the resource in the form of a colleague to listen and observe in the classroom and offer counselling support. If this does not help the teacher, a special pedagogue or a psychologist can listen, observe and give advice. If problems or different opinions arise, the principal can either support the teacher – using documentation or observation and counselling – or conclude that a higher level of support is needed. Support can be increased in a series of small steps (e.g. a special teacher in class or focused 1-1 time with a pupil). At the end of the continuum is placement in a special group for some time, but with the intention of helping the pupil back to the ordinary teacher-learner situation. In this case, it is not

just the pupil who needs support – the class teacher may also need new knowledge and skills. It is important for the class teacher and the special group teacher to forge a close relationship.
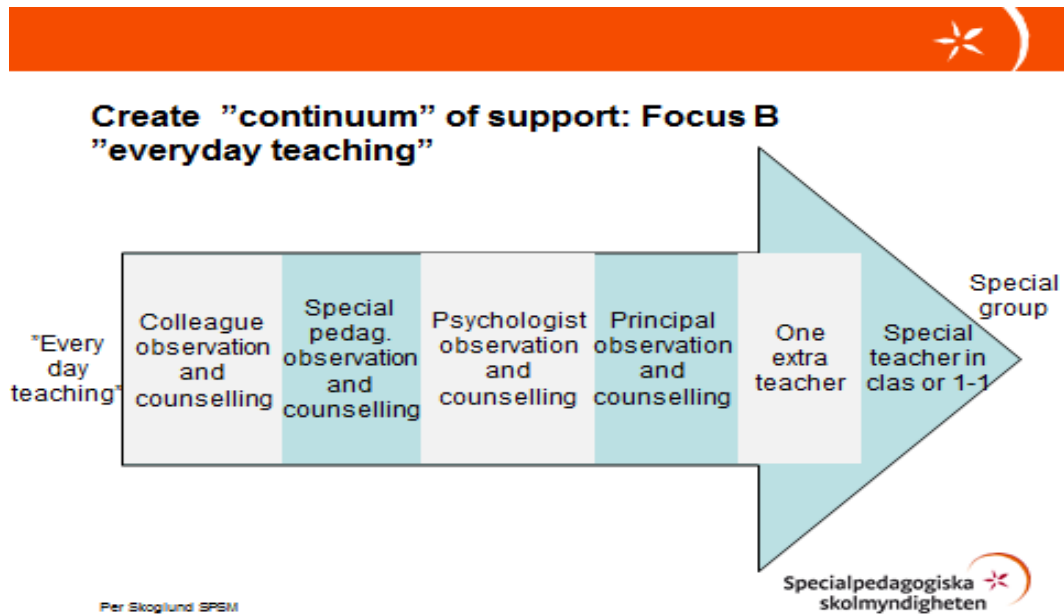
Figure 6: Focus B: Everyday teaching continuum

Finally, in order to avoid working on a reactive, case-by-case basis, it is important for schools to create a continuum for the systematic development of structures, processes and competences. This means capturing the relationship between incomes and outcomes at an aggregated level in the following steps:

(1) A yearly analysis of outcomes and shortcomings and gaps in the system, which guides (2) a yearly development plan in order to increase capabilities concerning the development of:

- Structures (thinking, localities and organisation)
- Processes (see/understand, planning and teaching)
- Competences (through work, in-service and external forces)

Create "continuum" of support: Focus C - Systematic Structure, Process and Competence development

	Yearly analysis	Yearly dev. plan	Structure develop-ment	Process develop-ment	Competence development
• Structure • Processes • Competence	• Outcomes • Gaps & lacks?	• Increase capability	• Thinking • Localities • Organi-zation	• See/under-stand • Planning • Teaching	• By work (focus B) • By in-service training • By external forces

Per Skoglund SPSM

Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten
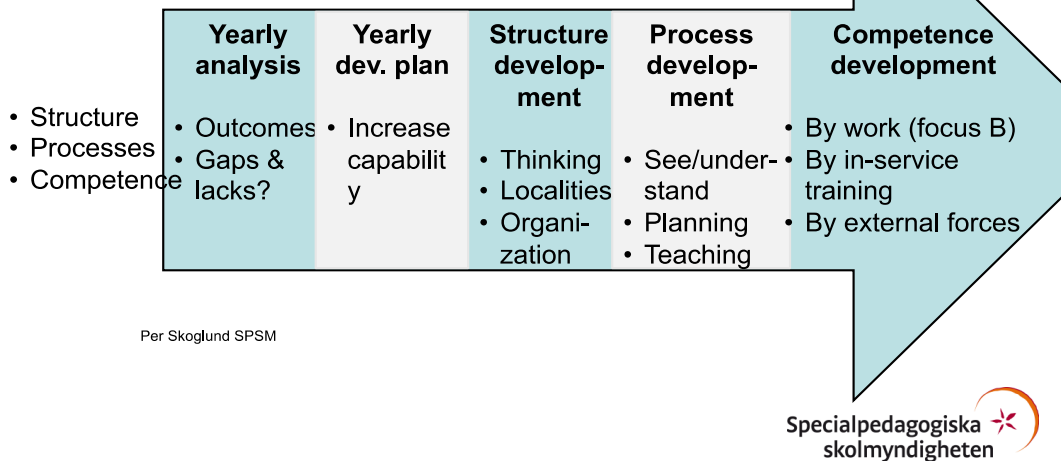
Figure 7: Focus C: Systematic structure, process and competence development continuum

Conclusion

In order to meet the challenges of diversity and the high expectations on the education system and schools, it is vital to realise that the traditions of the education system, schools and teaching face a necessary transformative change in order to increase their capability to include pupils. The key questions about such change are:

- How to break traditions that do not meet needs?
- How to combat fear, uncertainty and insecurity?
- How to support isolated principals?
- How to create adaptive teaching?

The key capability factors for transformative change seem to be:

- Context awareness; what are the challenges?
- Correspondence between vision, law and implementation
- Conceptual clarity
- Continuum of support
- Collaboration.

The concept of inclusion has been developed through three main dimensions and indicators placed within a conceptual model that links everyday teaching and learning to support from others. The importance of distributed leadership and the creation of systematic, organised and tri-focal (pupil, teaching and systematic development) support is stressed.

Finally, three inter-connected continua are suggested (pupil, teaching and systematic development) in order to illustrate how the relationship between everyday teaching–learning and 'support' should be more visible, elaborated and efficient.

In sum, it is about moving from using the word 'inclusion' imprecisely to an awareness of the qualities to offer each pupil in school, bearing in mind that a school is a place designed for learning, where all people are learners. Teachers learn from and with the pupils (to see and understand who you have in front of you), pupils learn through the teachers' adaptive teaching and through collaboration with other diverse pupils, and everything is built on the teachers' genuine interest in each and every person.

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION. KEY MESSAGES AND CHALLENGES

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This chapter aims to reflect on the context and on some of the main challenges of initial teacher education (ITE), and other professionals, in order to progress towards a more inclusive educational system. As I will mention later on, there is a wide variety of high-quality literature in this regard, covering both theoretical and practical elements. I will consider some of it and I will examine in greater depth the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* prepared by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (European Agency, 2012) – a document that aims to stimulate debate and developments on this important topic. Furthermore, I will add some reflections and proposals gathered during the International Conference on Inclusive Education, held recently in Brussels, in the working group 'highly qualified professionals' for inclusive education.

Inclusive education: a necessary goal, an uncertain way

Before raising any one of the specific questions or great challenges we face when proposing *inclusive education* – as is in my case the one of *teacher education* – it is necessary to reflect on the meaning and nature of the goal. Obviously, it is not my area of expertise, but to avoid it totally would be like setting out on a trip without a course.

In this sense, when analysing the question of inclusive education, the first thing that has to be recognised is its *paradoxical* nature. Certainly, at the highest level, there exists a clear and widespread international consensus that inclusive education is 'the way of the future' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/International Bureau of Education – UNESCO/IBE, 2009). It is evident in the development of educational systems that are seriously committed to improving *equity* which, according to their geographical context, involves reducing situations of discrimination, marginalisation and dropout that affect the most vulnerable learners (young people, migrant populations, ethnic minorities, learners who live in disadvantaged socio-economic contexts, in rural areas or those with a disability, among others).

In line with this ambition – and dues much to the effects of the major migratory movements caused by the increasing globalisation of our world, as to the triumph of the *right to recognition* (Honneth, 2010) of ways of being and identities that were previously discriminated against –there is an urgent necessity to educate future

generations to *live with and learn from human diversity* in a peaceful and fair way of living together.

> *The recognition of the dignity of individuals or groups is the essential element of our concept of justice… There are unfair social forms of treatment, in which what is at stake, is not the distribution of property or rights, but the absence of affection, care or social esteem, which steal the dignity or honor* (Honneth, 2010, pp. 14–15).

Only in this way will our societies' increasing diversity and plurality (from a religious, ethnic, linguistic, gender, sexual orientation, abilities and intelligences point of view) become a source of opportunity and enrichment for all and not the threat that many still view it as.

However, at the same time there is also broad agreement, particularly among scholars (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Slee, 2011), that nowadays many ways of understanding and realising inclusive education co-exist. This continues to create confusion and gives rise not only to inconsistent (Kozleski, Artiles and Waitoller, 2011), but at times, contradictory developments.

On one hand, there are those who perceive it as a relatively specific question, particularly involved with the education of learners considered as having *special educational needs* – and not without reason for these very learners have been and continue to be the most excluded and marginalised in the world. On the other hand, there are people who understand it as the educational component of a *new political and social project* (Slee, 2011), characterised by the prevalence in our society of ethical principles and values that we could well call 'inclusive' (Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

In the middle ground, there are wide-ranging viewpoints and analysis focused, for example, on its *dilemmatic nature* (Dyson and Millward, 2000; Norwich, 2008), on the *relationship between inclusion and achievement* (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007), or regarding *who must define what inclusive education is* (Nilholm, 2006). This demonstrates the complexity of the construct, particularly for those who are called upon to implement it.

At the same time, moving towards the same horizon and co-existing with the inclusive perspectives I am referring to, many other *projects* (whether small- or large-scale) follow parallel paths, with undoubted points in common, but without concerning themselves with each other. This is the case with projects carried out under headings like 'inter-cultural education', 'peace education', 'anti-discrimination education', 'gender equality', 'sustainable development' or those with more specific targets, like Success For All (http://www.successforall.org) and Learning

Communities (http://utopiadream.info/ca/?cat=1&gtlang=en). Of course, each of them includes several important parts of this great goal but, at the same time, they probably restrict it and partly impoverish it.

The concept's *lack of precision* is worrying and poses a significant danger that we must not underestimate. If, in the end, almost any initiative or school practice can be understood as *part of the process* towards greater levels of inclusion, inclusive education could end up meaning nothing (Echeita, 2013).

Three key messages emerge from these reflections. Firstly, as UNESCO/IBE (2009) emphasise, this 'is not a marginal issue' within educational systems, but a question that is both central and cross-cutting for all of them. Moving towards educational systems that offer greater equity and can provide a quality education for all requires a global vision and a *systemic perspective*. That is, it has to have an impact on each and every one of the educational system's components (management, curriculum, teaching, supervision, financing, etc.), as is the enlightened vision already stated in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994).

Secondly, it is the task and responsibility of academics, politicians and practitioners to progress towards consolidating a *common frame of reference* for inclusive education, meaning, scope and practices (with this or another term), to enhance the development of an alternative social project, different to what, unfortunately, currently prevails in the vast majority of countries, characterised by high levels of inequality, injustice and discrimination.

Finally, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that, in this process, educational systems have a great responsibility, but circumstances 'beyond the school doors', in terms of economy, social policy, employment, health, housing or culture, are also determining factors (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West, 2012). Therefore, we as 'educators' (teacher educators and teachers), have two big responsibilities. As *professionals*, we try to ensure that what happens within and between schools contributes to the development of more inclusive cultures, policies and practices. As *citizens*, we must ensure that what happens beyond the school doors aligns with these tasks, is consistent with them and contributes to progressing towards a more inclusive society.

Teacher education: a key element in the progress towards more inclusive systems

Notwithstanding the significant worldwide progress that has been made in recognizing the rights of all children to an educational experience that is inclusive and empowering, much remains to be done to ensure that in the classroom, the playgrounds, schools and communities 'reality matches the rhetoric' (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2013, p. 226).

Without any doubt, one factor that explains the gap between the vision of fair educational systems and real school and classroom practices is that most of our teachers were not sufficiently prepared with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to deal with pupil diversity. Nor were they equipped with strong values and ethical principles regarding social justice (Furman, 2004). Their initial teacher education (ITE) was organised from a different perspective, and with a lack of opportunities for professional development focused on inclusion. *Never again!* The next generations of teachers (and teacher educators) must be prepared to *be teachers for all pupils*, regardless of the pupils' social or ethnic background, gender, mother tongue, abilities or disabilities, etc., in order to provide all of them with equal opportunities to develop a quality life.

This involves learning the values, skills and knowledge – that is, the key competences – to *orchestrate* their teaching (Booth and Ainscow, 2011), in order to be able to deal with pupil diversity in their classroom, and promote meaningful learning and participation experiences for everyone. This is not a goal that can be achieved by teachers working individually, but rather through a collective will embedded in a *school for all*.

Available research clearly shows us that making partial changes – like adding some courses on 'inclusion' to the general curriculum of ITE institutions – is insufficient and inadequate. What is needed involves reforms in:

- Recruitment, induction, follow-up and continuous professional development;

- Teaching methods, course organisation, content and pedagogy; and

- Schools that serve as models of practice and appropriate places for these practices.

In this regard, there is *good and bad news*. The *good news* is the evidence that the international community has models, knowledge and enough experience on *inclusive ITE* to be able to stimulate reflection and action within teacher educator institutions that feel they have a responsibility to move in this direction, as Forlin's work (2012) recognises. The Agency's 'Teacher Education for Inclusion' (TE4I) project – which I will review in some detail later on – is a stimulating, quality example. However, obviously, there are more inputs available, from international organisations like UNESCO (2005), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD – 2010) or research teams, some of which can be read in the May 2013 special issue of the *European Journal of Special Needs Education 28 (2)*, which is fully dedicated to collecting an international perspective on teacher education for inclusion.

So what we must face is, again, a *systemic reform* of institutions, policies and practices for ITE. This is precisely the *bad news* regarding this key factor: whether 'we' (politicians, faculty leaders, teacher educators, stakeholders, etc.) can find the will, courage and determination to initiate and sustain the systemic change needed to implement it. Without a doubt, we need more research about how to mobilise these kinds of attitudes and values to move inclusive education forward.

The *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*

In a summary report called *Teacher Education for Inclusion across Europe – Challenges and Opportunities* (European Agency, 2011) from the 'Teacher Education for Inclusion' (TE4I) project (http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion), the Agency provides information on the best policies and practices to support the development of TE4I. This work is based on:

- *A review of policy documents* (European Agency, 2010a) from the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the European Union, United Nations, UNESCO, UNESCO/International Bureau of Education, OECD and the Council of Europe.

- *An international review of literature* in the field of initial teacher education for inclusion (ITEI) (European Agency, 2010b), covering topics like ITEI models, curricula in ITE, attitudes, beliefs and values, inclusive pedagogy, teaching practices, assessment of competences and teacher profiles, and teacher educators as models of inclusive practice.

- *An analysis of detailed country reports* from 25 participating countries on policy and practice for teacher education for inclusion, involving 55 experts from those countries, plus information gathered during 14 *country study visits* to highlight interesting examples in the field. In addition to the nominated country project experts, over 400 other stakeholders – including student teachers, teachers, school leaders, local area administrators, representatives from voluntary organisations, policy-makers, learners, their parents and families – were involved in project activities.

The project also produced a *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (European Agency, 2012) as one of the main outputs. It is important to highlight that:

> *[…] the Profile of Inclusive Teachers has been developed as a guide for the design and implementation of initial teacher education programmes for all teachers. It is not a script for ITE content, but rather should be considered as stimulus material for identifying relevant content, planning methods and specifying desired learning outcomes for ITE* (European Agency, 2012, p. 20).

Specifically, the objectives for this Profile document are to:

1 - Identify a framework of core values and areas of competence that are applicable to any initial teacher education programme;

2 - Highlight the essential core values and areas of competence necessary for preparing all teachers to work in inclusive education considering all forms of diversity;

3 - Highlight key factors supporting the implementation of the proposed core values and areas of competence for inclusive education within all ITE programmes;

4 - Reinforce the argument made within the TE4I project that inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and that preparing all teachers for work in inclusive settings is the responsibility of all teacher educators working across ITE programmes (European Agency, 2012, p. 6).

The heart of this model – which has four *core values* relating to teaching and learning – has been identified as the basis for the work of *all teachers*. These core values are associated with areas of *teacher competences*. For each area of competences identified, the *Profile* indicates the essential *attitudes, knowledge and skills* underpinning them.

The following are the core values and related areas of competence:

Core value 1. *Valuing Learner Diversity*. Learner difference must be considered as a resource and an asset to education.

The *areas of competence* within this core value relate to:

- Conceptions of inclusive education;
- The teacher's view of learner difference.

Core value 2. *Supporting All Learners*. Teachers must have high expectations for all learners' achievements.

The *areas of competence* within this core value relate to:

- Promoting the academic, social and emotional learning of all learners;
- Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.

Core value 3. *Working With Others*. Collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers.

The *areas of competence* within this core value relate to:

- Working with parents and families;

- Working with a range of other educational professionals.

Core value 4. *Personal Professional Development*. Teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning.

The *areas of competence* within this core value relate to:

- Teachers as reflective practitioners;
- Initial teacher education as a foundation for on-going professional learning and development.

Obviously this is not the place to reproduce this document, but rather to encourage readers (particularly teacher educators) to do it by themselves (something that can be done in each of the languages of participating countries), to stop and think, and to use it to review and reflect collaboratively upon their own ITE policy and practices.

However, as mentioned before, although this *Profile* is an inspiring stimulus on this major topic, there are others which have the *added value* of being real ITE programmes, implemented in various prestigious ITE institutions worldwide and with solid evaluative research behind them. This is the case, for instance, of the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), running at the University of Aberdeen's School of Education, designed in the context of a Scottish Government funded research and development project called the 'Inclusive Practice Project' (Florian and Spratt, 2013). Based on the principles of 'inclusive pedagogy' (Alexander, 2001; Hart et al., 2004; Florian, 2010), the three big themes of this PGDE ('Understanding learning', 'Understanding social justice' and 'Becoming an active professional'), with their associated principles, concepts, skills and attitudes, are an enlightening example of how to implement the principles and key challenges associated with preparing teachers to become more inclusive in their practices. The same can be said regarding the work of Kozleski et al. (2013) within the United States context and the work of Arthur-Kelly et al. (2013) from New Zealand and Australia.

Some big challenges and debates on ITE

The reflections on enhancing initial teacher education programmes to support inclusive education, based on relevant research all over the world, allow us to point out some (but not all) of the big challenges in ITE that we must address urgently. They include the following topics:

Universities and school placements

The work carried out on university campuses to educate new teachers is very important, but it is insufficient. In all programmes for student teachers, one very

important component is to learn about the 'how' of the profession, something that is better achieved through school placement. As Lawson, Norwich and Nash (2013) point out, this is particularly important as it is argued that 'whatever is achieved in the university, the teaching practices and attitudes that student-teachers usually learn to adopt are those currently dominant in the schools' (McIntyre, 2009, p. 602). Traditionally, the ITE partnership with 'practice schools' tends to be rather superficial, with a clear difference in the knowledge status within the discourse in schools and universities. In this context, it is important to take into account that the pendulum is now swinging in the opposite direction, with some countries (like England) increasingly using employment-based and school-based routes for ITE. Research also shows clear limitations in this scheme.

Therefore, the challenge is to build meaningful joint work among universities and schools (particularly through school leaders), in addition to a clear conceptual framework to link theoretical and practical knowledge:

> *If this is not in place, the school practice may become more influential than learning in the HEI* [Higher Education Institution] *and – given the difficulty in most countries of finding sufficient quality placements – may not support the development of inclusive practice* (European Agency, 2011, pp. 38–39).

Becoming a reflective and critical practitioner

This is a strategic key competence for all teachers (Perrenoud, 2007) and accordingly, as Kozleski et al. (2013) particularly emphasised, it is necessary to thoroughly prepare student teachers to develop different lenses for engaging with social justice, equity and learning opportunities for all students; to focus on issues of *power and privilege* that are rooted in the school curriculum; to be conscious of their role in selecting what to deconstruct, conserve and transform, that is, to *think critically* about their personal beliefs, values and assumptions about the world we live in and how these ideologies impact upon interpretations and interactions with others (Cunliffe, 2004).

Thus it is a challenge to create enough *quality spaces, activities and time* in ITE programmes (both on the university campus and in school placements) for these 'critical reflection' practices, in which student teachers can question their beliefs, values and assumptions about equity, inclusion and social justice, with the *guiding and mediating support* of their teacher educators.

Who trains the trainers?

Teacher educators must be *a mirror* in which student teachers see the key competences of inclusive education in action. However, we know that this is not the

case in many ITE programmes, even in fields closely related to this broad area. Obviously this is a delicate question within a profession and institutions with high levels of autonomy. For this reason, it is also important to exert some 'pressure' to move in this direction, a question where graduating standards for students have a role to play.

Therefore, it is a challenge for ITE to find *critical friends* and step up collaborative schemes with experienced inclusive teacher educators and institutions in order to support them in reviewing their own assumptions, values and practices regarding the key competences needed to prepare inclusive teachers. At a national or regional level, it is also necessary to set out *clear standards for graduating student teachers*, allowing them to monitor whether they have correctly learned the competences related to inclusive education.

The early years are very important in the profession and for professional development

> If the work carried out through the different programmes for teacher educators is crucial, it is even more important, as Arthur-Kelly et al. mention, to ensure that:

> *graduates receive appropriate levels and types of support to develop values, knowledge and skills that will ensure they are able to provide and sustain effective inclusive classrooms, when they move into the profession* (2013, p. 221).

Systemic and long-term planning of individual professional development programmes for all teachers is also required.

ITE institutions must extend their responsibilities beyond the HEI's gates in order to support new teachers when they enter the profession. Clearer and better partnerships are needed among ITE institutions and with those closely related with continuous professional development.

Not only teachers must be inclusive professionals

Teachers are crucial, but there are other professionals around them – such as educational psychologists – who also need to be inclusive in their values and practices. As Farrell and Venables (2009) mention, the 'medical model' that a great number of educational psychologists use in their practices is a major barrier to inclusive education. Unfortunately, Faculties of Psychology have largely not felt the need to reflect collectively on this topic. However, they are not the only ones that need to be educated about being 'inclusive professionals'; lawyers, doctors, architects and design professionals must be educated with the same inclusive values that teachers need.

HEIs face the challenge of reviewing their entire undergraduate and postgraduate courses, making inclusive values a cross-cutting competence in all of them.

More teacher educators and teachers with diverse backgrounds are needed

When shall we see a significant increase in the number of teachers from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, in our teacher education institutions? In this regard we have seen the major efforts made by some young people with disabilities – such as Pablo Pineda in Spain – to obtain their teaching diplomas, only to subsequently come up against the frustrating barrier of administrative regulations that prevent them from entering into the profession.

Thus there is a challenge for most countries to overcome the attitudinal and administrative barriers that prevent teacher educators and teachers from diverse backgrounds from entering the profession and becoming models of our commitment to their rights.

Teaching is a complex, demanding and challenging profession, and although *scholar education* is always recognised as a key element for the prosperity of our societies, few countries give teachers the opportunities and the recognition to properly fulfil their important role. This is the case both in 'north and south' countries. Work in inclusive schools will increase these feelings of 'an impossible profession' (in the sense of never reaching an ideal outcome), as Sigmund Freud liked to say. This may be one of the reasons behind the declining number of applicants for teacher education, as a recent *Eurydice Report* on this topic reflects (European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice, 2013). This information corresponds with the picture of an ageing teaching workforce – particularly in secondary education – which could lead to teacher shortages and which would therefore make the process of achieving a more inclusive educational system more difficult.

In this context, high-quality ITE is more important than ever and the key competences and challenges involved in preparing teachers for on-going professional learning and development are crucial.

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SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

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Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to summarise the working group session and to elaborate somewhat on the key message from this conference on support systems and funding mechanisms. In addition to this introductory section, the paper expands on the initial presentation for this key message and summarises some of the questions and responses from the group. It closes with a discussion of a special educational needs (SEN) outcomes study in California, showing inclusion as a key practice cited by high performing districts and the context in which these inclusive services were provided.

A major tenet of the paper is that, in addition to inclusion, accountability provisions are essential to effective and high-quality services for pupils with SEN. To enhance their lifetime outcomes, these provisions must extend beyond allocating adequate resources, beyond deadlines and legal requirements and beyond fiscal tracking. In addition to serving pupils with SEN in mainstream classes, true accountability must include the on-going measurement of the academic, social and emotional progress of pupils with SEN.

Why is this important and how does it relate to support systems and funding mechanisms? In considering alternative approaches to allocating resources and support services to pupils with SEN, it is first essential to pose some key questions:

- What are we attempting to accomplish/produce?

- At what cost, i.e. what resources are needed to accomplish our goals and how do these relate to those reasonably available?

- How will we be held accountable for success?

Because education is considered so important, all developed countries make very substantial investments in this enterprise. It is of vital important to the students served, to their families, to local communities and to the nation. This point was also mentioned by one of the respondents to the main presentation, who highlighted the importance of efficiency in provision and emphasised that SEN funding should be seen as investment and not just as costs.

Given this, it is essential that optimal strategies for financing these services include the full consideration of the questions above. To place financing in context, it is helpful to consider the linkages in the provision of education shown in Figure 8.

Euros/Dollars/Kroner, etc.	Education Resources, i.e. teachers, other staff, computers, etc.	Education Outcomes, i.e. reading, writing, socialisation	Enhanced Individual/Societal Outcomes

Figure 8: Investing in education for enhanced individual and societal outcomes

The relationship above illustrates the importance of considering financing issues within their broader context. As described by one work session respondent, 'financing discussion must follow the discussion of policy and practical goals'. SEN financing cannot be considered in a vacuum, but must be considered within the much larger framework of the goals we are trying to accomplish and how financing provisions will work in conjunction with other policies designed to promote effective services for pupils with SEN.

While societies allocate funds to procure educational resources, simply doing so does not inform the question of efficiency of provision and does not constitute accountability. This resource investment is not an end in itself, but is intended for the production of such educational outcomes as individual academic proficiency and socialisation. Nor is the purpose of these educational outcomes the intended end result, but rather it is done for the achievement of such longer-term individual and societal goals as economic productivity and successful participation in society.

Thus, the emphasis of this paper regarding support systems and funding mechanisms in support of inclusive education in Europe will extend beyond immediate and short-term goals to consider the longer-term purposes for which these funds are intended. In this context, questions such as whether inclusive education costs more or less than integrated provision become less relevant. The real question is what are we attempting to accomplish through education provision and what is the most cost-effective way of reaching these goals? Simply re-directing existing resources away from practices that do not enhance intended goals and towards ones that do will likely increase results and need not result in an increase in expenditures. As mentioned by a respondent during the session, 'funding based upon values (societal goals) and good practices (we need data to fully understand

what practices are good/effective) will result in better outcomes'. (The comments in parentheses have been added by the author).

As an analogy, if we spend less on a car repair but the result is that our car still runs poorly, this cannot be considered a saving. The question is how can we get the car running in the most cost-effective way. Any funds spent that do not improve the performance of the car may be considered wasted. If the car is important to us, at a minimum, we must spend what it takes to make the car run well.

The same is true for education. Inclusion has the potential to be much more effective with regard to social skill acquisition for students with and without special needs. Inclusive education is important to prepare pupils with SEN to succeed in society as adults and for society to be fully accepting and ready for their full economic and societal participation. In addition, this paper will present evidence that pupils with SEN are more likely to acquire the academic skills needed for later life through more inclusive settings.

For these reasons, this paper will argue that inclusion is the most cost-effective approach to providing education to pupils with SEN. However, this paper will also present data suggesting that pupils with SEN may not fare well academically when inclusion is done poorly. Thus, it is not enough to provide inclusive services: there must be mechanisms in place to determine the degree to which students are benefitting from these services.

Summary of presentation on this topic at the conference

Prior to the conference summarised in this paper, in November 2011, the Agency hosted a Hearing at the European Parliament, in Brussels. Member countries nominated 88 young people, both with and without special educational needs and/or disabilities, from secondary and vocational education, to discuss what inclusive education means to them. Some of the issues they raised directly link to provision and financing. For example:

- 'There were teachers who didn't want to co-operate in making inclusive education work for me and others; teachers should accept everyone in their classes.'

- 'Inclusive education is quite often claimed to be expensive, but in trying to save, we end up paying more to handle problems. Inclusive education needs to be done in the best way. Inclusive education is an investment, we must invest in people; people are the only resource.'

A possible role for assessment was also noted:

- 'Allocation of funding and resource decision-making can be based, among other factors, on assessments of pupils with SEN.'

Most likely, this statement refers to basing funding, at least to some degree, on the assessed needs and/or characteristics of individual pupils with SEN. In addition, however, to what degree should we consider the assessed outcomes or results achieved for pupils with SEN as a factor in resource decision-making and allocating funds?

Four 'requirements' pertaining to funding policies were also mentioned, which provided the primary focus for the presentation for Key Message 4 of the 2013 conference. These are:

- Requirement 1: Policy on financing fully supports inclusive education.

- Requirement 2: Policy on financing is fully based on educational needs.

- Requirement 3: Policy on financing fully facilitates flexible, effective and efficient responses to needs.

- Requirement 4: Policy on financing fully promotes support from related services and necessary inter-sector collaboration.

In regard to the first requirement, 'full support' can be construed to mean ensuring 'adequate' resources in support of inclusive education, as well as the development of fiscal policies that create incentives, rather than disincentives, for the provision of inclusion placements and services. Both considerations are important.

First, it is important to understand what types of inclusive behaviours we are attempting to 'fully support'. For example, these might include:

- Movement of pupils with SEN from separate to neighbourhood schools.

- Movement of students in neighbourhood schools from separate to integrated classrooms.

- Ensuring the provision of appropriate supports for pupils with SEN in integrated classes to foster positive academic, social and emotional outcomes.

'Fully support' also requires definition in regard to this requirement. This might mean ensuring 'adequate' resources in support of inclusive education that are sufficient to meet national educational goals.

Also critical is structuring fiscal incentives to support and promote inclusion. That is, it is difficult to foster inclusion when fiscal policies clearly favour more restrictive placements (for example, separate special schools).

For countries that fund special education schools with no good mechanisms for allowing fiscal resources to follow students into more inclusive settings, per capita funding may offer an attractive approach. Under such a system, funding follows the student, which is in accord with the Agency's requirement of support for inclusive education practices.

Per capita funding also aligns well with Requirement 2: that financing policies be fully based on educational needs. The primary basis under a 'per capita' formula is the number of students. Under this type of system, funding follows students. When pupils with SEN enrol in special schools, special needs funding goes to these schools. When they move to more inclusive neighbourhood settings, the funding follows them to support the provision of the supplemental services they require wherever they are served.

Under this type of approach, the amount of funds the central government allocates to a municipality/district/school is determined by formula. In simple form, the formula is:

- The per capita amount X the number of pupils

However, in practice, the per capita funding amount often varies for certain categories of students. These systematic variations in per capita funding amounts are sometimes referred to as funding 'weights', which are prescribed multiples of the per capita funding amount specified for a 'basic' student. For example, a base student might be one with no special conditions (e.g. SEN) in primary school.

Key determinations to be made in per capita financing are:

- What is the base funding amount?

- What special categories of students will be awarded higher funding amounts (or weights)?

- What varying 'weights' are appropriate for the varying classification of students included in the formula?

For example, individual per capita funding amounts may be determined on the basis of cost analyses showing the relative costs of serving students with selected special conditions, e.g. intellectual disability, in relation to a 'base' level student. The results from one such cost analysis by category of disability, conducted for the US Department of Education, is shown in Figure 9.
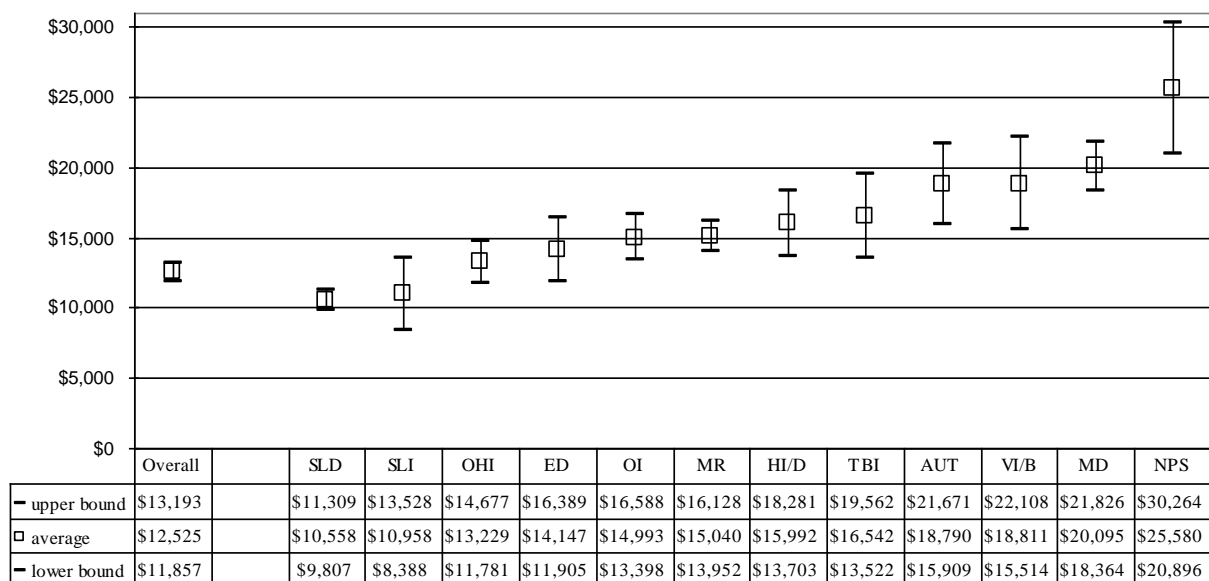
	Overall		SLD	SLI	OHI	ED	OI	MR	HI/D	TBI	AUT	VI/B	MD	NPS
— upper bound	$13,193		$11,309	$13,528	$14,677	$16,389	$16,588	$16,128	$18,281	$19,562	$21,671	$22,108	$21,826	$30,264
□ average	$12,525		$10,558	$10,958	$13,229	$14,147	$14,993	$15,040	$15,992	$16,542	$18,790	$18,811	$20,095	$25,580
— lower bound	$11,857		$9,807	$8,388	$11,781	$11,905	$13,398	$13,952	$13,703	$13,522	$15,909	$15,514	$18,364	$20,896

Figure 9: Average Expenditure by Category of Disability – US (1999/2000)

Source: Chambers, J., Parrish, T. and Harr, J. J., 2002. *What are we spending on special education services in the United States, 1999–2000?* **Special Education Expenditure Project (SEEP). Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research, Center for Special Education Finance**

These amounts also may be based on:

- Historical national patterns of education spending;

- Research and/or practice from other countries;

- Research within the country regarding adequate education provision and cost differences among classifications of students;

- Adequacy analysis, i.e. determining the resources needed to meet national education goals leads to finance policy that fully supports inclusive education

Per capita funding also facilitates flexibility in accordance with Requirement 3. Rather than funding or providing specific resources – e.g. pre-determined types and quantities of personnel, equipment or facilities – per capita funding allocates monetary resources promoting flexibility in local use. This fostering of local determination has the potential to promote 'effective and efficient' responses to needs, as stated in Requirement 3.

However, determining the degree to which sites are actually achieving this requires data with regard to local practices and results. For example:

- What are the counts and characteristics of their pupils with SEN?

- What services are these students receiving and in what types of settings?

- To what degree are these students progressing in terms of their academic, social and emotional development?

For example, data from the US shows progress with regard to inclusive placements for students with SEN on average. The number of pupils with SEN spending 80% or more of their school day in regular education classrooms has risen in the US from 32% to 54% from 1989 to 2005. At the same time, pupils with SEN served in separate facilities have declined early in this period from 6% to 4%, where they have remained for the past 15 years. (The remaining percentages of pupils with SEN are in other categories of placement between these two extremes.)

However, these national placement trends vary dramatically by state:

- The percentage of special education students served in the least restrictive setting ranges from 78% in North Dakota, to 10% in Virginia.

- Placements in separate facilities vary from 2% of all children in special education in several states, to 16% in New Jersey.

Variations across individual school districts within states are even more dramatic. For example, studies from three states (California, Illinois and Massachusetts) (Parrish, 2012; 2010; Hehir, Grindal and Eidelman, 2012) show a positive relationship between inclusion and academic results for students with SEN. In addition, two of these studies where the data was compared (California and Illinois) found no relationship between inclusion, educational results and average per-pupil special education spending. This data suggests that inclusion is a cost-effective and efficient way of improving outcomes for students with SEN. Furthermore, it seems to indicate that spending more, without corresponding changes in policy, may have no effect on improved outcomes. It also suggests that higher degrees of inclusion can be achieved without overall increases in spending.

As an example, Figure 10 presents data on individual school districts from the State of Illinois showing placement patterns for pupils with SEN that vary dramatically. Every school district in the state of Illinois is represented on this graph with size of the dot (or circle) corresponding with the size of the district.

However, while the data shows a positive relationship between inclusion and academic results on average, it also shows that some of the most inclusive districts are among the worst academically. Hence the importance of the Agency's Requirement 4, i.e. that the 'Policy on financing fully promotes support from related services and necessary inter-sector collaboration'. This data suggests that simply enrolling students in their neighbourhood schools and placing them in general education classrooms with all other students is not enough. It is also essential that support services appropriate to each child's unique needs accompany students into

these more inclusive settings. As stated by a student at the Agency Hearing, to be effective and efficient, 'inclusive education needs to be done in the best way'.
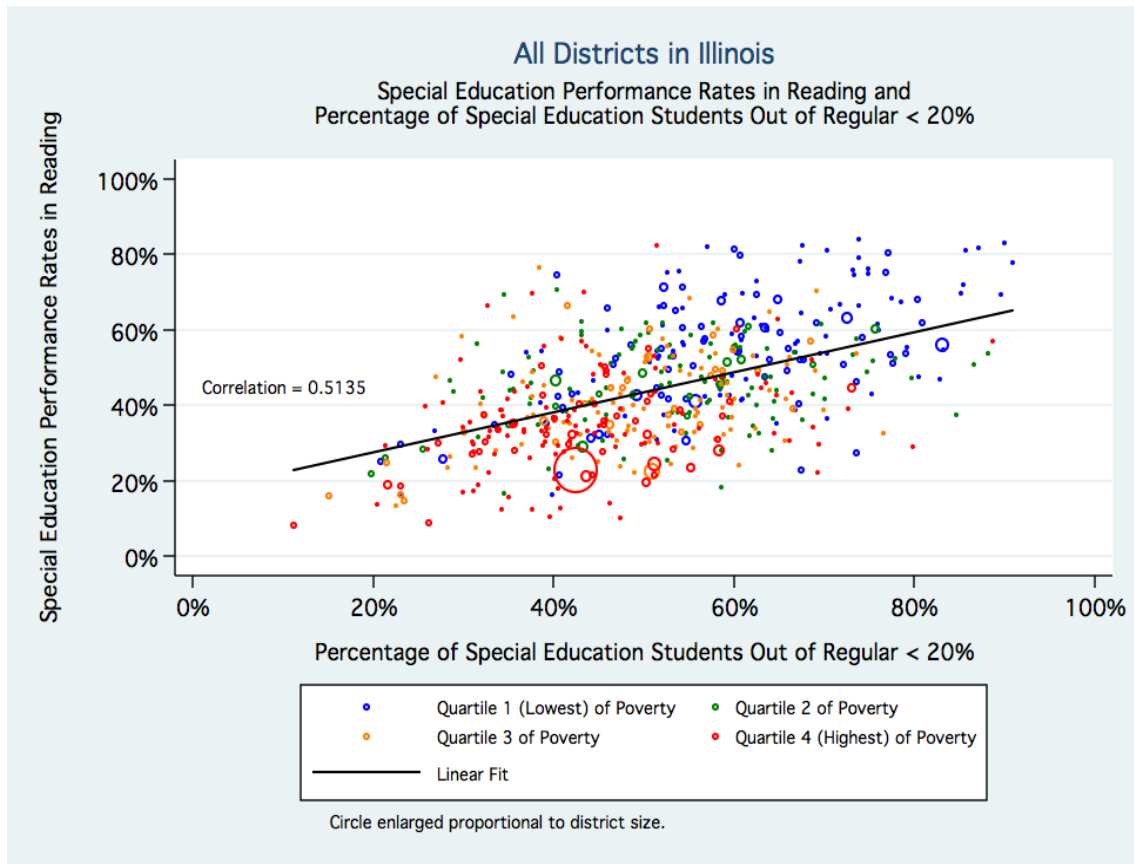

Figure 10: Percentage of pupils with SEN testing proficient or above in reading and the percentage spending 80% or more time in general education classrooms, State of Illinois (2008/09)

Questions during the session on Support Systems and Funding Mechanisms

A number of respondents, representing different agencies and countries, provided excellent responses to the primary presentation. In addition, the progress toward inclusion described by these discussants and other session participants appeared to vary substantially across the countries represented.

One important point raised during the discussion was that while per capita funding, as described above, may have certain advantages, the advisability of adopting such a funding scheme may depend on where a country is in regard to implementing inclusion. For example, in countries that already place the vast majority of students with SEN in neighbourhood schools, funding for the supplemental supports needed for these students may already be at the school level. Hence, a major advantage of per capita funding in creating fiscal incentives for such movements may not be as important as other policy priorities.

It was pointed out that per capita funding could possibly create incentives for over-identifying pupils with SEN and/or for placing them in more highly weighted classifications. There is evidence that this may be the case. Moreover, all funding systems contain incentives of one type or another that are likely to affect SEN provision (Mahitivanicha and Parrish, 2005). Given this, funding policies that create incentives for practices that policy-makers in a given instance consider most important should be adopted. For example, funding incentives of one type or another might be developed to promote encouragement and recognition for schools, districts, and/or communities showing results for pupils with SEN that are much stronger than statistically predicted.

A concern raised during the session related to the difficulty of measuring outcomes for pupils with SEN. For example, perhaps there is no way to measure if the practices employed locally are actually making progress for pupils with SEN. This is a commonly expressed concern and the difficulties associated with these measures may constitute one important reason why most accountability systems regarding special needs provision focus primarily on inputs. For example, are all legal and procedural provisions being followed? Are the funds allocated for special needs provision accounted for and being spent as intended?

While these are important issues, they miss the key question with regard to special needs accountability. This is the degree to which pupils with SEN are benefitting from the services provided. The data for the State of Illinois presented previously shows broad gaps in academic achievement for pupils with SEN across school districts. If data were available, it seems likely that broad variations in results would also be found elsewhere. It seems likely that the services provided to pupils with SEN are much more effective in meeting their educational outcome goals in some communities than in others.

Given the importance of special needs services to these pupils, their families, the community and the nation, it seems essential to go beyond the provision of service to also implementing measures of their efficacy. Instruments exist for measuring students' academic, social and emotional well-being. While they are not perfect, the total absence of such measures provides no hard data on the degree to which the services being provided are helpful to students with SEN, what communities are badly in need of assistance in regard to the provision of such services and which communities are showing remarkable success from which others could learn.

Inclusion is a key practice cited by high performing districts serving students with SEN

As an example of the type of outcomes-based analysis suggested above, a California study compared academic outcomes for students with disabilities in relation to the overall characteristics of the students served (e.g. percentage in poverty, percentage of students identified for special education services and the breakdown of these students by category of disability). Its purpose was to identify California school districts whose pupils with SEN were showing much higher levels of academic proficiency than statistically predicted (Huberman, Navo and Parrish, 2012). Four districts emerged that were clearly outperforming their peers in terms of academic outcomes for pupils with SEN.

Through interviews with respondents from these districts, it seemed clear that these unusual results were due to a lot of hard work and specific strategies that these districts had developed to improve the academic performance of all their students, and especially those with SEN.

From these discussions, the following strategies emerged as common themes, with the first two emphasised by all four districts and the second two by three of the four:

- Inclusion and access to the core curriculum.

- Strong collaboration between general and special educators.

- Continuous assessment and use of Response to Intervention (RtI).

- Targeted professional development.

The first of these strategies is clearly a theme of this conference. However, it is important to note that in addition to inclusion, full 'access to the core curriculum' is emphasised. If students are enrolled in general education classrooms without proper support or perhaps without modifications to the methods in which instruction is provided, inclusion may not produce 'access to the core curriculum'.

The second strategy of collaboration is also key. When pupils with SEN primarily receive instruction from general education teachers, it is essential that this be done in close harmony and co-operation with the special education teachers in the school. Rather than being in separate classes, special education teachers in such schools spend virtually all of their time in general education classrooms with regular classroom teachers. This has the potential to benefit all students, as well as pupils with SEN.

While the strategy of continuous assessment may sound like constant testing and appear overly burdensome, school authorities describe these as brief, but regularly administered, assessments of the content being taught at a given point in time. This

allows them to track and analyse the degree to which students are actually mastering the material being taught. Their purpose is not to determine student success or failure for grading purposes, but rather to allow teachers individually and as groups (e.g. a grade level or a subject area) to understand the degree to which they are succeeding at what they are trying to do.

Had the material been sufficiently mastered by their students so that these teachers could move ahead or was additional teaching required in some areas? Did some classes perform much better than others in some areas of the curriculum, such that these teachers might compare strategies and techniques so as to learn from one another? Such open comparison of results requires a great deal of trust among teachers, but was clearly an important component of the collaboration strategy that unusually successful schools cited.

The last strategy cited by these successful schools – targeted professional development – was also a theme clearly emphasised at the conference. For example, Raffaele Ciambrone, a respondent for this session, described territorial support centres in Italy, which provide peer-to-peer support for teachers. This strategy generally refers to the need for all teachers to receive initial training and on-going support in attempting to meet the needs of all students in fully integrated classrooms. Successful inclusion employing the kinds of strategies listed above constitutes a considerable professional challenge for teachers, who will clearly need on-going training and support.

Analyses also showed that these successful school districts were not relatively high spenders with regard to the provision of special needs service. In a personal discussion with the California State Department of Education administrator in charge of these programmes state-wide, it was pointed out that these high performing districts were not always exemplary in terms of procedural compliance measures. This may suggest that procedural compliance alone can be a poor predictor of academic results. When choosing between the two, the latter must be considered the most important. Correct paperwork matters little if students are not learning.

Social and emotional outcomes for students are also measurable and have been gathered by schools in California on a state-wide basis. It may be argued that enhancing academic outcomes may be at odds with promoting emotional and social well-being through the increased pressures of high levels of academic preparation and those associated with testing. Nonetheless, it also seems likely that students who are successful academically at school are more likely to feel accepted and to score higher on social and emotional measures. This latter interpretation is supported by state-wide analyses of the relationship between school climate and

academic success recently completed in California (Voight, Austin and Hanson, 2013).

Conclusion

As mentioned, a major tenet of this paper is that accountability provisions are essential to the provision of effective and high-quality inclusionary services for pupils with SEN. This focus is in in keeping with the comment of Linda Jordan, a respondent to the main presentation for this topic, who called for 'a more rational use of money, instead of funding old concepts of disability and failure'.

With regard to the cost of inclusionary services, a US study conducted by McLaughlin et al. concluded that fully supported placements in neighbourhood schools cost about the same as in separate schools. However, the cost of inclusion is really the wrong policy emphasis. If separate services are incapable of meeting the social and academic goals we have for pupils with SEN, why would they be pursued regardless of their cost? As mentioned by a respondent, what are the 'hidden financial costs of non-inclusion'?

As examples cited for Europe, Garry Freeman, Director of Inclusion, Leeds Metropolitan University Associate reports (in a private email):

> The UK system is undergoing some 'drastic changes', with the emphasis moving away from just labelling (and how that can be used as a possible excuse) and towards a focus on Quality First Teaching.

Finn Ó Murchú, Senior Inspector for Special Education, Ireland, reports (in a private email): 'In our Ministry of Education, we are working on the wise use of resources to support special education in inclusive learning'.

The promotion of inclusionary practices is a worthy fiscal goal that can be achieved by re-directing additional resources and should not require substantial investments of additional funds. However, the data presented today suggests that inclusion alone is not enough. Rather than inclusion for its own sake, our goal must be improved social, emotional, academic and life outcomes for pupils with SEN.

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RELIABLE DATA

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Introduction

We live in an age of data – a time when more and more countries are actively developing ways in which datasets can be systematically generated and used to assess, compare and evaluate education at the levels of individuals, of groups (students and teachers), as well as of schools and systems. As countries increasingly compete to provide higher standards of education for more and more students, issues of data reliability – its accuracy, completeness and consistency – are of paramount importance. Yet, as will be discussed, there are many problems associated with generating data that meets these criteria. Data may be accurate but incomplete, consistent but not accurate, complete but not comparable, comparable but not reliable. Consequently it is more important than ever that the strengths and limitations of available data should be clearly understood and be meaningful to the people who are affected by it, as well as by those who generate and use it. This paper discusses the issue of data reliability from three perspectives:

- counting all: challenges in classifying and categorising children in order to provide education and other social services;

- the role of data systems in understanding inclusive schools; and

- challenges in generating and using reliable data.

The importance of these three perspectives on data is highlighted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (United Nations, 2006) which requires States 'to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention' (Article 31). In other words, data is needed for the formulation of national policies that will enable the Convention to be implemented and monitored. With regard to education, Article 24 of the Convention requires countries to develop an inclusive education system at all levels. In this case, at least two kinds of data are needed to ensure that the Convention is implemented: data about people with disabilities and data about inclusive education systems. Indeed, through the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (GPcwd), the international community has adopted a twin-track approach to implementing the CRPD by providing support for disability-specific

projects *and* advocating for the systemic inclusion of disability perspectives in mainstream development (United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF, 2013).

As will be discussed, the issue of disability classification for educational purposes is contentious. Moreover, knowledge about inclusive schools requires the generation of different data, notably data on school factors. Both data types are limited by a lack of consensus about key variables and how they are defined. This real-world limitation presents complex conceptual and technical methodological problems that affect both data collection efforts and reliability. Consequently data, particularly for purposes of cross-national comparisons, must be used cautiously.

Counting all: challenges in classifying and categorising children in order to provide education and other social services

From a rights-based perspective, it is important to know who is included and who is excluded from schooling. At issue, however, is how students should be counted. As many have pointed out (e.g. Hollenweger, 2014; Prewitt, 2005), knowledge systems depend on some way of classifying information. Otherwise information about who has access to and who is excluded from schooling is not available to answer questions about access and equity in education systems. Without some way of counting, there can be no accountability. In many countries, students with disabilities are counted by disability type or status, but this has led to the unintended consequence of marginalisation within education systems, particularly in countries that operate dual-track education systems of special and mainstream education.

In some countries, students are counted by type of need or the kind of resource that is provided. In England, both approaches are in evidence. School inspection guidance suggests that inspectors pay particular attention to the achievements of:

- *disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs*
- *those with protected characteristics, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, as defined by the Equality Act 2010*
- *boys*
- *girls*
- *the highest and lowest attainers*
- *pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support, including:*
  - *looked after children*
  - *pupils known to be eligible for free school meals – a school is unlikely to be judged outstanding if these pupils are not making at least good progress*

- *children of service families*

• *those attending alternative provision* (Ofsted, 2014, p. 25).

However, focusing on different groups of learners as a way of determining 'all' is problematic because of the variation within and between any identified groups. In addition, individuals usually fit into more than one category. In practice, various approaches to classification are used, based on different assumptions about human difference and disability. As Wedell (2008) points out, the purpose of classification may be about identification and eligibility, it may be administrative or it may be to guide interventions. In addition, purposes may change over time as conceptualisations and methods of classification develop in response to concerns about stigma associated with certain labels and the inadequacy of particular classification schemes to meet their intended purposes. In the case of disability categorisation, Wedell describes the 'evolving dilemmas' that have occurred when the measures put in place to serve one aim conflict with another. As a result, it is difficult – and some would say, impossible – to adopt a one-size-fits-all disability classification system, and there is no universal system of disability classification or categorisation in education.

Even within countries, there are differences in categorical definition depending on purpose. The need for specificity for research purposes will be quite different to the need to count all learners for accountability purposes. Similarly, the categories of learners that are educationally relevant for planning interventions may be very different to those that help meet parental expectations. Nevertheless, because most national systems use one disability or special educational needs classification system to meet multiple purposes, the conflicting purposes and unintended consequences that often result lead to contested views about the classification itself. For example, because individuals are hard to categorise, data about individuals does not provide much useful information about planning interventions. The number of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs in a school can only provide information about enrolment. It does not provide information about provision. Although this is common sense in many places today, it is still the case that disability statistics are sometimes collected on the basis of enrolment in particular forms of provision, such as special schools. As discussed below, the individual differences approach to data collection in education is highly problematic.

Uses and limitations of student-level data on disability for educational purposes

Although knowledge about human differences is important (a student who is an English language learner is different from a student who has been diagnosed as having autism; a six-year-old is different from a ten-year-old, and so on), whatever can be known about a particular category of learners will be limited in the

educational purposes it can serve, because the variations between members of a group make it difficult to predict or evaluate provision for each of the individuals within a group. As noted above, many learners fit into more than one category and the problems associated with identifying and classifying disabilities for educational purposes have been of concern for many years. Yet there is a presumption that classification and categorisation systems are necessary to improve provision of services, to ensure equitable criteria for eligibility and access to curriculum, and to establish meaningful statistics and indicators.

Today, there is growing recognition of the interaction of individual characteristics with environmental and social influences in the production of disability. There is also an awareness that categorising individuals as disabled tends to locate the difference within the person, although the national perceptions, responses and consequences of such differences vary. This makes national and international comparisons difficult, but developments in the ways in which disability is conceptualised have resulted in new international classification systems that challenge traditional ways of thinking about disability categories and labels.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed a resource-based definition to overcome the different national interpretations of concepts such as impairment or special needs. It consisted of a tri-partite classification system (OECD, 2004), which assigned students with different national labels and categories into three cross-national categories – A (disabilities), B (difficulties) and C (disadvantages) – but because the categories were defined as one-dimensional referring to categorically distinct groups, the problems of disability classification remained. Though the OECD approach to classification represented an attempt to improve the comparability of country data by establishing a common format for comparison based on the allocation of additional resources, it did not capture the complexity of child characteristics, including information related to broader demographic characteristics for data at the country level or how they are interpreted differently in various countries.

Another effort to address the limitations inherent in categorical classification systems is the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF), developed by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) to provide a general model and classification of disability. It presents disability as the result of a complex interaction between the components of functioning (body functions and structures, activities/participation) and contextual factors (environmental factors and personal factors). An ICF version for children and youth (ICF-CY) is also available. While this tool presents an opportunity to develop a more adequate representation of the complex issues arising in the education of students with disabilities, its uptake in

educational settings has been limited. This is due in part to the fact that it recognises the complex interaction of factors, which means it is time-consuming to administer appropriately.

Perhaps because of their complexity and the limitations noted above, these recent attempts to improve data comparability and accuracy about individual differences and the responses that are made to them have not been taken up within the international community. Nevertheless, the pursuit of better systems continues. As Florian and Rouse (2014, in press) have noted, there are substantial issues to be addressed in developing such systems. These include:

- conceptual issues (relating to classification of students, forms of assessment, their purpose, reliability and validity, the types of outcome measures used and the extent to which data and its variables are comparable);

- technical issues (relating to data collection, entry, sharing and analysis, together with the compatibility and capacity of IT systems);

- ethical/legal issues (relating to privacy, responsibility, access and the ways in which collecting data may distort educational decisions); and

- economic issues (relating to the cost-benefit analysis of data systems in terms of what they can achieve to support educational improvements and what they cost to develop, administer and maintain).

With the growing capacity of information technology to handle large amounts of data, addressing these issues takes on renewed urgency. There are now many efforts to develop national and state-level student databases which enable data gathered from a wide range of sources to be linked together, so that the many influences thought to affect the educational progress of individual students over time can be studied directly. These datasets can be linked to answer questions about inclusion and exclusion of students with disabilities in education systems. However, as is the case with generating reliable disability statistics, measures of inclusive education are also complex and contested. For example, having a high proportion of students with special educational needs in a school is not necessarily a measure of inclusion, though it is sometimes used as such.

Indeed, there is confusion about what counts as inclusive education. At one extreme, there are narrow conceptualisations of inclusion that have resulted in simply replacing the word 'special' with 'inclusive'. At the other extreme, conceptualisations that are too broad can mean that educationally important differences are overlooked. Rejecting the identification of individual differences in education based on medical models of disability classification does not mean that there are no educationally important differences between learners. Knowing what these differences are, when they occur and how to respond are at the heart of

inclusive practices. What teachers do when students experience difficulties is what matters and, in this regard, disability statistics are of limited use. Questions about the kinds of data that are needed instead are being addressed, for example by the recent Agency publication, *Participation in Inclusive Education: – A Framework for Developing Indicators* (European Agency, 2011).

The role of data systems in understanding and developing inclusive schools

The concept of inclusive education has defied precise definition. While there is a broad consensus and understanding that inclusive education is a process, this can take many forms and there is variability in practice: from the very specific – for example, including children with disabilities in mainstream schools by relocating specialist provision from special to mainstream schools – to a very broad notion of responding to diversity among learners without regard to categorical differences. In this situation, knowing how many pupils are in a particular categorical group tells us very little about the processes of inclusion and exclusion that operate within a school.

As Dyson and colleagues (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2004) have recognised, calculating the proportion of students in a school who have been identified as having special educational needs, says little about to what extent and in what ways that school is, or is not, inclusive. Information about the physical presence of students with special educational needs in a school does not explain how far policies and practices support their inclusion and participation in the life of that school. Thus, even in countries where sophisticated national data systems exist, there are limitations in using them to answer questions about inclusion. As has been noted, 'not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted' (Cameron, 1963, p. 13).

Inclusive education takes place in the varied environment of classrooms and schools and is carried out in a broader policy context that promotes both inclusive education and a continued international emphasis on competition between schools and jurisdictions as a measure of effectiveness. In the daily practices of schooling, the enactment of inclusion is influenced by the curriculum, pedagogy, leadership styles, organisational and grouping strategies, the additional support and interventions that are available and, crucially, by the adults who work in schools – in other words, by the variables that are associated with effective schools. However, the day-to-day life and priorities of schooling are increasingly influenced by the ways in which the expected outcomes of education are described and monitored through assessment and evaluation policies and practices.

Today, international comparisons of how well students perform on standardised tests such as PISA (OECD, 2010) are widely used as international indicators and benchmarks of how well national systems of education are preparing students to live and work in the global economy. While this process is used to generate particular understandings of school effectiveness, it is problematic because it does not include data on all students. A potential danger is that the collection and use of this data can distort a school's priorities and disrupt the development of inclusive education (Florian and Rouse, op. cit.).

While educationalists are increasingly called upon to give account of the extent to which their efforts and interventions make a positive difference for individuals and groups, data on approaches and pedagogical practices that lead to positive outcomes is also needed. Just as disability classification data is used to serve different purposes, data on student performance also serves different purposes. Demands for public accountability at the individual, school and system level, in order to inform judgements about quality and value for money, are being linked to cross-national comparisons as countries compete to produce better and better school outcomes. This can distort efforts to provide inclusive education for all students, as those who struggle to compete are left behind. Generating data about inclusive education does not occur in isolation. However, it may involve additional information to that which is collected to judge effectiveness. While technological advances have made it possible to link data systems and to work with larger and more complex datasets, it is essential that their development includes all learners, so that the process of teaching and learning is not distorted and does not lead to the reproduction of dual-track forms of provision for some students.

The Agency has undertaken work to develop a model for exploring inclusive education using an 'input-process-outcomes' model similar to that used in school effectiveness research (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000), but including data on students with disabilities (Kyriazopoulou and Weber, 2009; European Agency, 2011). This model requires the development of data systems that need evidence to be collected on indicators from different aspects of schooling. The data must be capable of revealing information about inputs in order to provide baseline information. Information about *inputs* might include the children, their characteristics and starting points; the teachers, their experience and qualifications; other human resources; material resources; forms of provision and types of schools; buildings and other educational spaces; policies and legislative framework; and funding mechanisms and amounts. The data should also provide information about *process*. Process indicators would include details of programmes, interventions, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, school organisational structures, grouping strategies and ethos. Details about *outcomes* would include information about academic and non-academic outcomes, transitions and destinations, completion rates, physical health

and well-being. Having information across all three phases of the model (input-process-outcomes), allows (in theory) any possible links between the different stages to be explored in the interests of transparency, accountability and research and –crucially – as a means through which improvement efforts may be informed by evidence (Florian and Rouse, op. cit.).

Challenges in generating and using reliable data

Relevant existing data sources, such as national statistics, national census data, annual census of schools, audits and inspection reports and school self-evaluation and reviews, can all be helpful for providing data that can be used to understand inclusive schooling. It is increasingly technically possible to link this data to answer questions about inclusive education. However, there are many challenges raised by questions about the comparability of this data.

In many countries, inclusion is taken to mean the process of increasing the numbers of students with disabilities attending mainstream schools who, in the past, would have been prevented from doing so because of their identified special educational needs. However, the evolving international consensus on inclusive education views it as one that now extends to anyone who might be excluded from, or have limited access to, the general educational system within a country. In today's world this includes a much broader group of vulnerable children, such as Roma children, street children, child workers, child soldiers and children from indigenous and nomadic groups (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2010). Clearly there is a need to develop ways of counting all children that are respectful and sensitive to differences in national context, but also allow some measure of comparability. In addition, while disability classification remains an important mechanism in ensuring that all students are counted, the demands of inclusive education require data on variables about provision rather than disability classification.

The current focus on competition through rank-ordered league tables within and across educational jurisdictions and the comparison of countries' educational performance through international testing regimes, such as PISA (OECD, 2010), can give rise to important understandings of school effectiveness, but offer little insight into the outcomes of inclusive education. Indeed there is an incentive to exclude low achieving students from the comparisons in order to gain competitive advantage. While there may be future opportunities for countries to make greater use of international comparisons to gain a better understanding of the progress of low achieving students, students with disabilities and others with additional support needs, the constraints caused by the lack of reliable data about participation,

completion rates and outcomes for different groups from different jurisdictions mean that improvements in comparability may not be possible for some time.

Data systems play an important role in understanding inclusive schools, but they are limited by the contested nature of the concept of inclusion and they are beset by complex methodological problems. Often the data available at national level is strictly controlled and regulated because of data protection and privacy concerns. However, this may not be the case with data on individual children or their families available at classroom and school levels. Nevertheless, regulations in some countries may not permit the collection of specific student-level data, the aggregation of such data or the pooling of such data from different sources, for example, from health or criminal justice systems. Some countries have laws restricting the electronic storage and sharing of data. Another concern may be that some data may be linked to individuals and contain personal information relating to students, parents and teachers. These considerations create ethical challenges for the development of data systems. Nevertheless, educationalists at all levels are encouraged to make the best possible use of available data, understanding that it has value (Schleicher, 2012), but also poses ethical and methodological challenges (Morris and Auld, 2012).

Finally, the technological developments that allow for the creation and analysis of large-scale datasets hold promise, but 'big data' presents its own problems. Of concern are developments in the field of predictive analytics, which are increasingly being applied in educational settings. While the use of 'big data' may help to answer important questions about student performance, using it to predict or 'personalise' educational opportunity can limit as well as enhance experience. The problematic and imperfect history of using ability tests to predict performance and identify 'special needs' should serve as a potent reminder that using data on past performance and other variables, such as social class, to predict the future does not support the ideals of the inclusive education system.

Conclusion

Reliable data is data about which we can be confident. While there are many definitions of reliability, the concept is often associated with accuracy and completeness – two attributes that are notoriously difficult to describe with regard to concepts of disability and inclusive education. Nevertheless, the increasing demands for accountability, evidence-based policy and practice, and resource allocation create the need for meaningful data related to all students. This is required in order to know which children are receiving what services – when and where – as well as some kind of information about the quality of those services and the outcomes they achieve. Big datasets are being developed and used in

educational settings and while they will surely help to answer important questions, using them to predict student needs or make recommendations about educational interventions or forms of provision risks a return to the kind of classification systems that have served as barriers to the development of inclusive schools.

To improve data comparability and usefulness, there must be consensus about the type of classification that should be used to make comparisons. At the same time, questions need to be asked about the extent to which the unintended consequences of classification – over-identification of children from certain minority and socio-economic groups, lowering of expectations, stigmatisation and peer rejection of those identified as disabled and/or having special educational needs – serve as a barrier to the development of inclusive schools. In recent years, many countries have seen an increase in the numbers of students identified as in need of additional or special educational supports. This raises questions as to whether this increase represents greater diversity or exposes the inadequacy of a system of schooling that is too narrowly focused on academic achievement.

Questions about how students should be counted and how information about them should be categorised are more important than ever. The emergence of 'big data' and predictive analytics in education are important developments that will influence how education systems change over time. It is important that the data used by these systems is meaningful as well as reliable. While the problems of generating reliable data for cross-national comparisons are important, developing greater consensus about what data is needed and how it should be used is crucial.

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From 1996 to 2002 he worked in the field, as a school counsellor in a secondary school in Madrid and as an adviser in a teacher centre, where his duties included planning, implementing and evaluating in-service teacher training in the field of inclusive education. Since 2002 he has worked at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) as a senior lecturer in the Developmental and Educational Psychology Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and in the Faculty of Psychology.

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