

Inclusive education Latvian context

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- My story
- Historical background
- Major challenges of inclusive education in Latvia

My story



My story

- The study programs were not focusing on developing necessary competences for the teachers when working with diverse children
- More or less I was prepared to work with kind of an ideal (without any physical, learning, behavior, motivation or attitude problem) child
- The methodology I used could be useful for an average classroom, but not for a classroom with a great diversity

Historical background

- **Latvia has a great history of education for children with special needs and for diverse population**
- **1809** – the first private school for **deaf and mute** children
- **1854** – the first private school for **mentally retarded children (the first such kind of institution in Russia, part of which Latvia was then at a time)**
- **1872** – the first public school for **blind children**

Historical background (1918 -1940)

- The impact of human pedagogy/reform pedagogy

1917 Dēķens “Vienības skola”/ ”Unity school”

“One school for all ”, where “disappear the differences between the estates, religion, sex, even the interest and ability” (Dēķens, 1917, 1. p..)

Pedagogical debate: pro/contra “one school for all” (*Vīksniņš, 1937*)

Historical background (1918-1940)

- Legislation impact on “education for all”

1919 „Likums par Latvijas izglītības iestādēm”/”The law of Latvian education institutions” (*Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1919)

Compulsory education

Compulsory education should be referred also to blind, deaf, mentally retarded children (*Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1919) There should be organized special schools for that reason.

Parents had the right to choose the educational institution (not after 1934.)

Compulsory education regardless sex, religion, race, estate, etc.

Historical background (1918-1940)

- The future development of special school network and increased profiles of special school
- The numbers of children in special schools increased rapidly
1925./1926. – **744**,
1936./1937. - **1461**.
(Latvijas kultūras statistika 1918–1937, 1938)
- The special schools accepted only children with serious problems (Kravalis, 1997)

Historical background (1918-1940)

- Special pedagogy issues and also issues of 'diversity' were included in that time **teacher preparation curricula**. (Kestere, Nīmante, 2007),
- Those issues were included in **many pedagogical books and articles** (*Dēķens, Zemtautis, Svenne, Jurgens, Andersons, Stūrītis, Štāls, Rudītis, Vīksniņš, Kronlīns, Inzelbergs*)
- Close relationship with **Western traditions** of special pedagogy.

Historical background (1918-1940)

- **In 1925.** was founded “Rīgas pilsētas jaunatnes pētīšanas institūts”/ “Riga City Youth Research Institute”. The task was to examine the IQ of children who were not able to keep up with normal school training, after that to help to choose the proper institution for the child, either special schools or special classes (*Staris, 2000*)

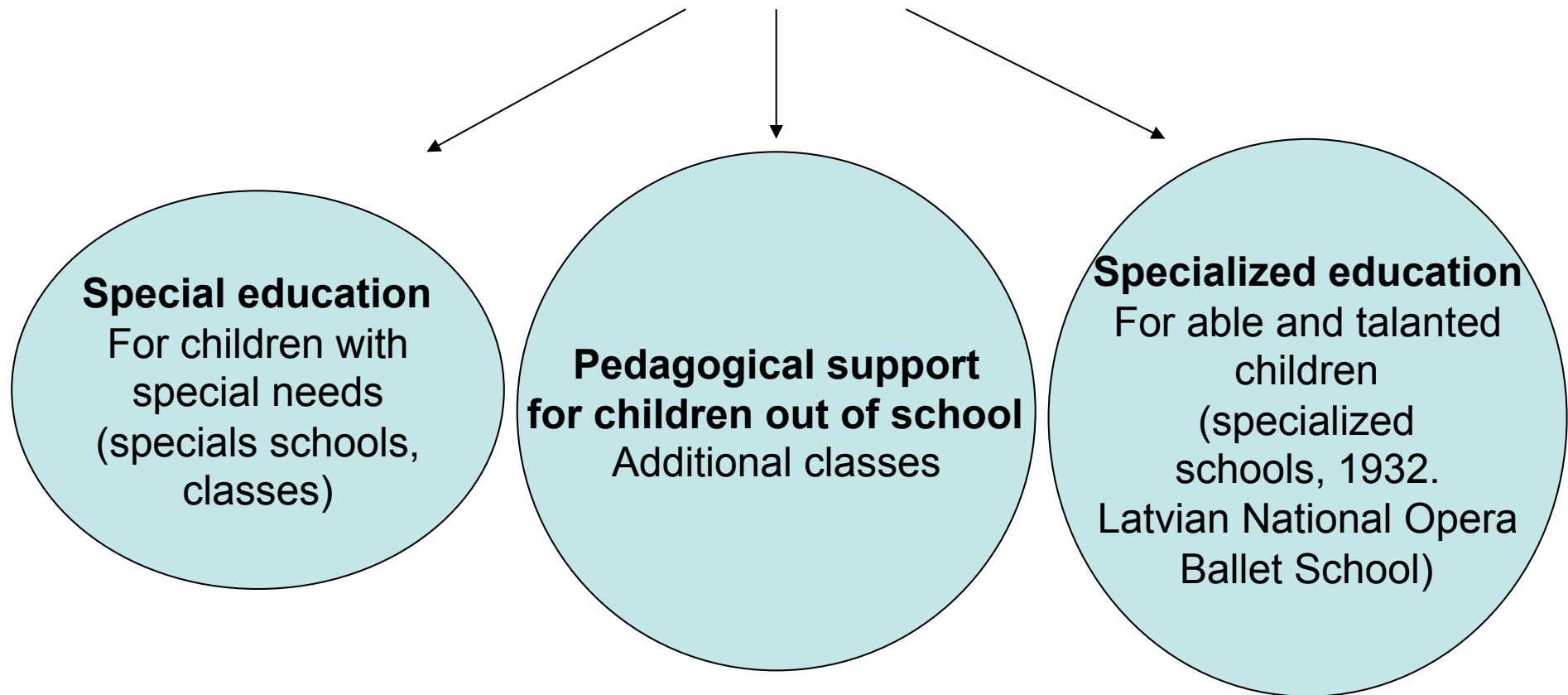
Historical background (1918-1940)

- So-called **addition schools** were organized for those who by any reason were out of the school, who did not get a proper education and who were willing to continue with basic education.
- 1934./35 there were **51** additional school with **3 010** students (*Latvijas statistikas gadagrāmata, 1935*),
- 1938/39. there were **108** additional school with **5 283** students. (*Latvijas statistikas gadagrāmata, 1939*)

Historical background (1918-1940)

- The goal to reach a compulsory education for everyone gave results:
1920. **30 201** children out of school (**82,01%** of all children of age 8)
1935. **13 057** children out of school (**38,92%** of all children of age 8 (*Kronlīns, 1937*)
- Still there were the group of the children, so called un- teachable children, they had to stay in a special institutions (*Staris, 2000*)

The education system response to diversity: Republic of Latvia (1918 – 1940)



Response to diversity

Soviet Latvia (1945 – 1991)

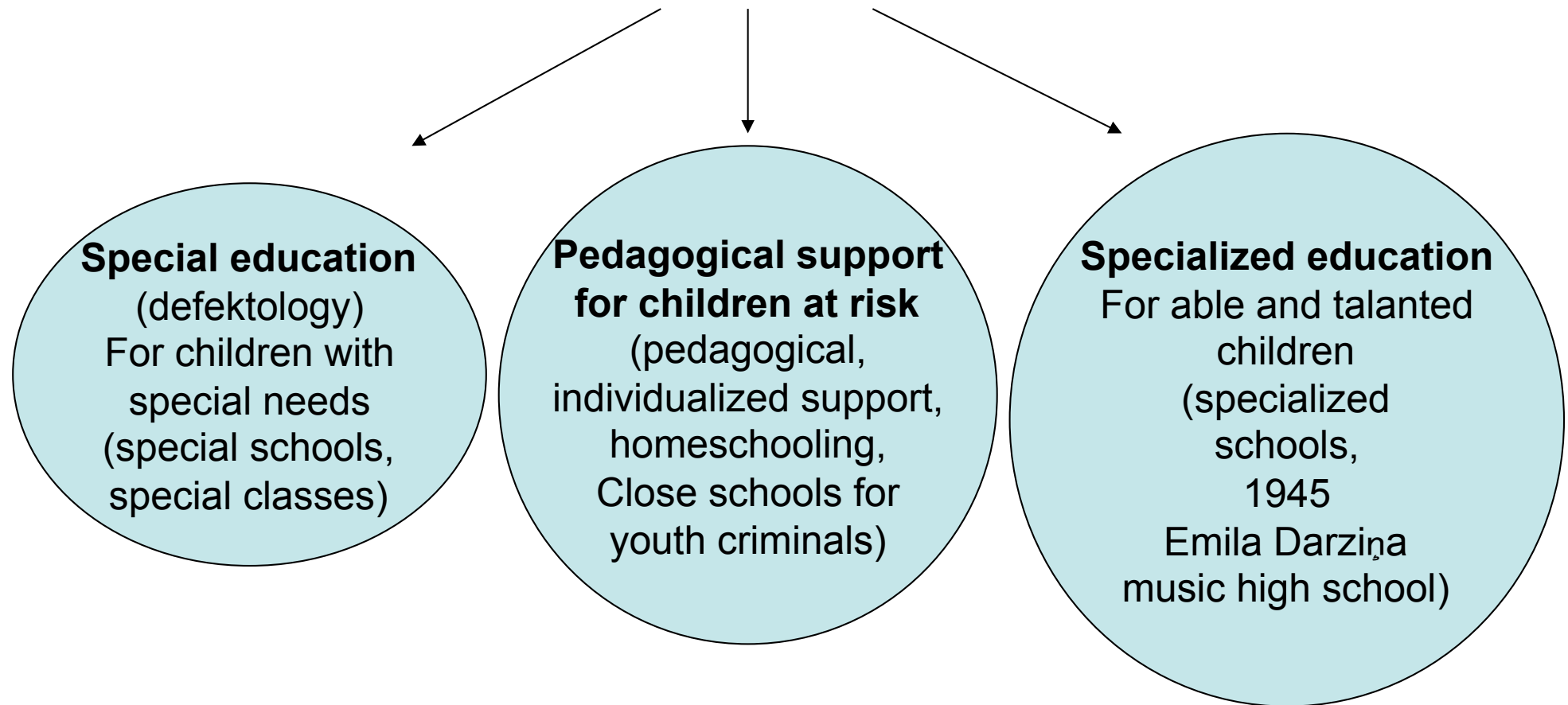
- Soviet constitution stated that "citizens have the right to education".
- All children of compulsory school age must receive an education (compulsory education 7-15, 1945)

Response to diversity

Soviet Latvia (1945 – 1991)

- 1945/ 46. out of the school were **20054** children,
- 1948. out of the school were **13100** children. (*Visiem skolas vecuma bērniem jā mācās skolā, 1948*)

The education system response to diversity: Soviet Latvia (1945 – 1991)



Special education (defectology)

- A. Strujeva writes: "If a child is retarded, deaf-mute or blind, the school should help parents with a help of People's Education Department to apply for a special school."*(Strujeva, 1949)*

Special education (defectology)

From the beginning defectology (special pedagogy) had enough broad objectives:

- education of defective children,
- defective children's guidance to prepare for working life
- In order to solve the problems of comprehensive education – "nervous" children were placed in sanatorium boarding schools.
- In order to reduce the numbers of stray children there were opened special schools (runned by Ministry of Interiour) (*Kravalis, 1997*)

Special education (defectology)

- **Expanded network of special education, increased numbers of profiles and the numbers of children receiving special education**

1945./1946 There were **702** children in **11** special schools

1989./1990 There were **8729** children in **55** special schools and 29 special classes.

- The system of identification (since 1964) and diagnosing children with special needs was established (medical-pedagogical commission)
- The special education system **was no dealing with severe handicapped children**, the terminology un – teachable child remained till 1991

Special education (defectology)

- According to the Kravalis, the main reason for such a broad differentiation and "separation" policy was based on scientific studies (conducted by the Education Ministry of Education Scientific Research Institute of Pedagogical Psychology, Psychology, science laboratory), which stipulated that children who have experienced any difficulties in normal school curriculum (eg, children with mental retardation), can better learn in specially organized, separate conditions. (Kravalis, 1997)

Conclusions

- Historical research reveals that compulsory education is the major predisposition for education for all
- External differentiation was the main way of dealing with diversity before second world war and after
- The reduced freedom of the parents to choose an education path for their children – connected with reduced freedom in society (Republic of Latvia after 1934, in Soviet Latvia after 1945)
- Inclusiveness or education for all idea is strongly connected with humanistic pedagogy.

Realities in nowadays education

- Since **1991** there has been broadened cycle of “teachable children”, the abandonment of terminology “unteachable” child.
- Special schools since **1991** admitted children with **severe special needs. 1990/91 15 children enrolled in two special schools.**
- **1994** the integration of children with special needs into regular schools became a reality, more and more children with special needs enrolled into regular schools since.
- In **1998** the concept and terminology “Inclusive education” was introduced
- **1999** the law “Izglītības likums”/“Law of education”, right to education for everyone, states that education is compulsory, the law contains several inclusive principles: equality, every child’s right to education, **parents right to choose the form of education**

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Perception of inclusive education**

What is an inclusive education?

Still it is not clear what the nature of inclusive education is? Is it a philosophical movement, political movement, or it is a new approach, or a combination of different theoretical approaches?

Inclusive education is a complex phenomenon (*Dyson, Millward, 2000*).

In Latvia inclusive education is most often seen as expanding possibilities for children with special needs. It is often associated with integration processes or even confused with special education. (*Nimante, 2009*)

- Inclusive education bases itself on values of humanism; it is child-centred; it is the reflection of the social model in practice; it represents the ideals of a democratic school in pedagogical solutions, supports and concentrates on the educational needs of every pupil by ensuring its accessibility and belonging to everyone, the participation in all the aspects connected with school life as well as the achievement of everyone in effective and qualitative education process. (Nimante, 2008)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **How to solve the diversity puzzle?**

From what level we are looking at it?

Ecosystem perspective

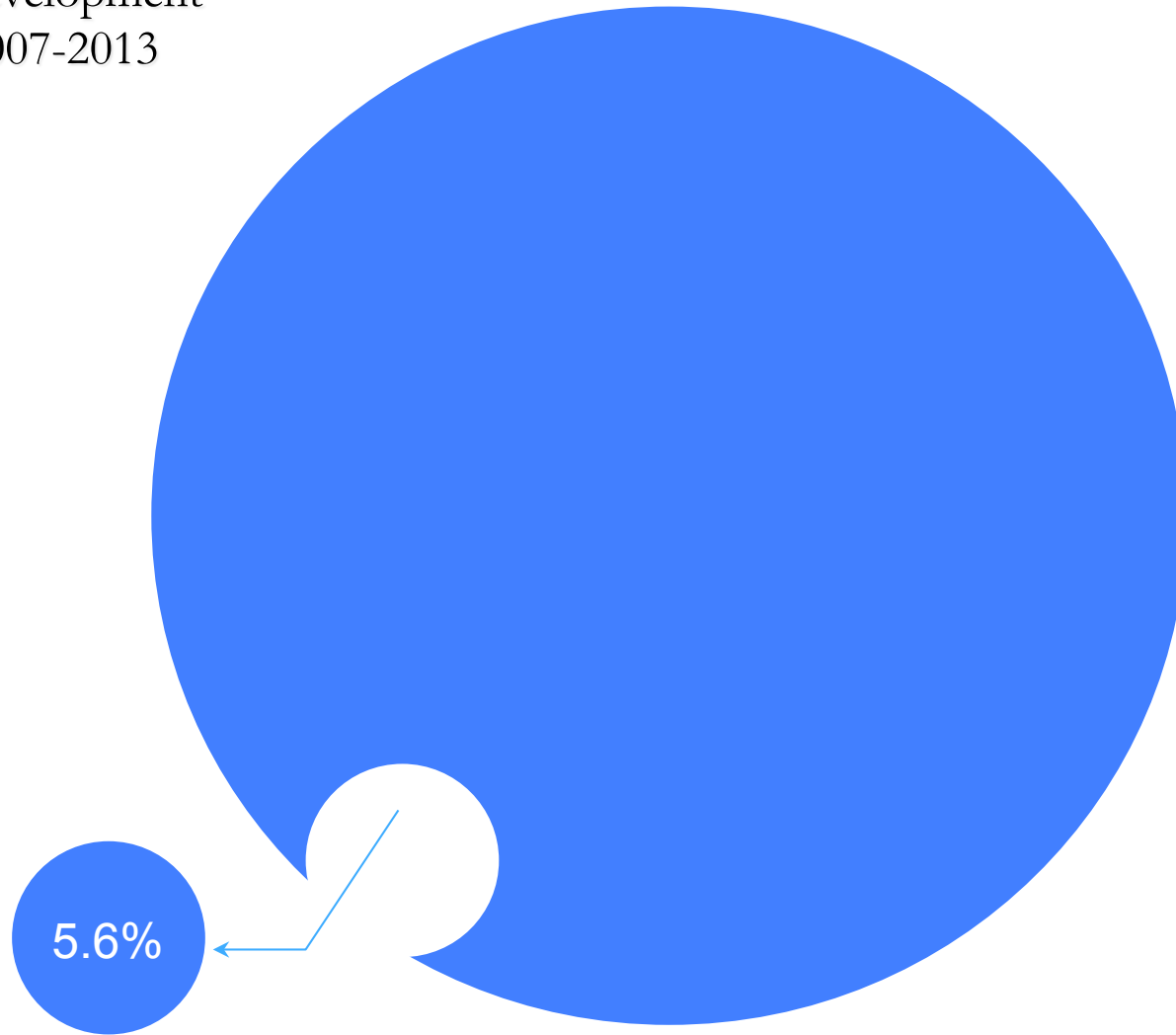
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

How inclusive are Latvian education system?

Bronfenbrenners' ecological theory- the child's development should be looked at in several mutually influential systems, which is the child's surrounding environment

Comprehensive education

Data from
Education Development
Guidelines, 2007-2013



Paradox's of inclusive education

- In Latvia the basic focus is on children with special needs and less on other children with other/ exceptional needs which is currently a source of concern for more and more educators. (*OECD, 2000*)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **How to solve the diversity puzzle?**

Long history of external differentiation

It was substantiated by the fact that it was “the best means” for individualization, i.e., for ensuring the educational needs of children with special and exceptional needs.

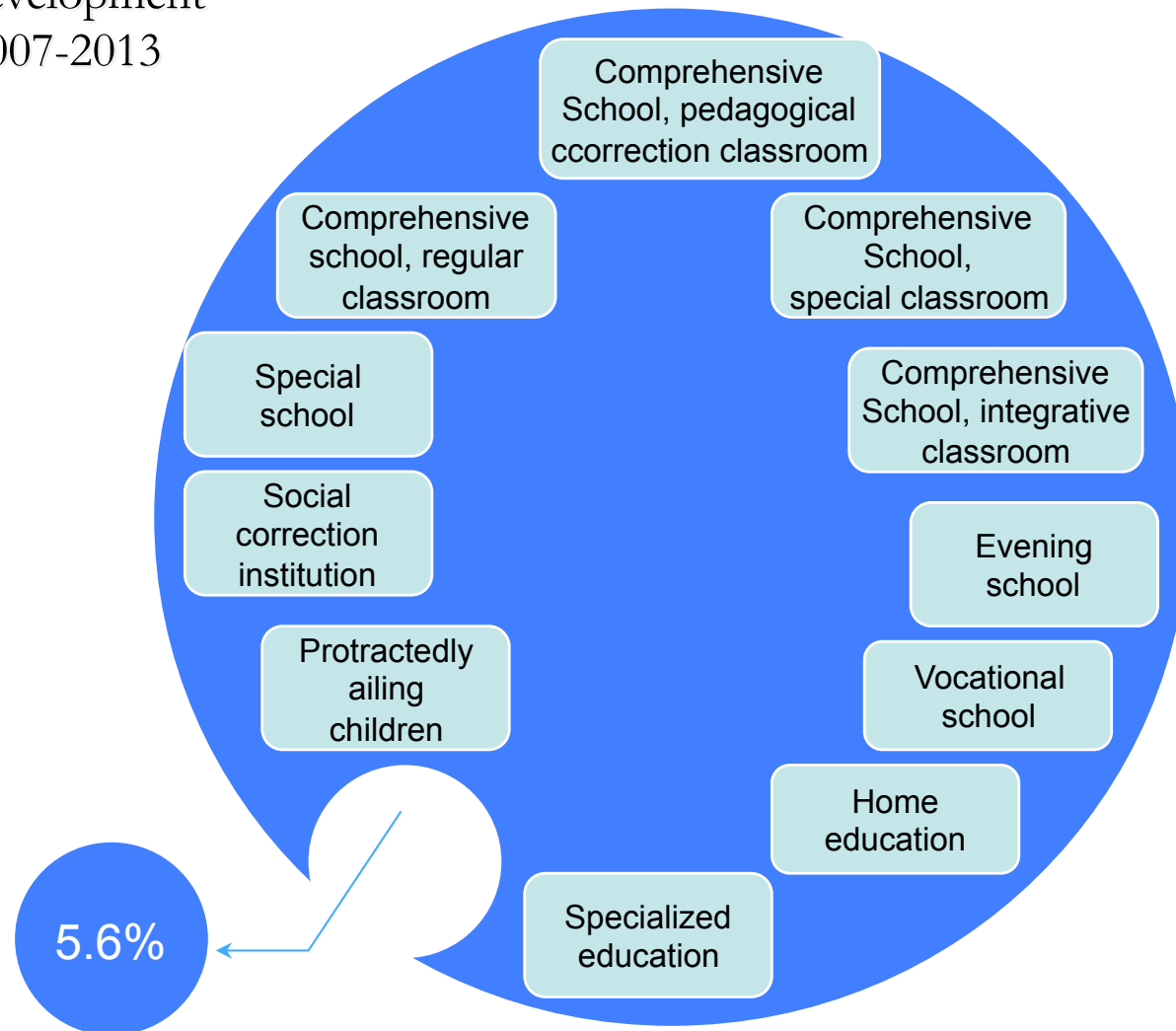
Assumptions are based on “old” research

There are no other research evidences (based no Latvia practice)

The external differentiation has become even more differentiated

Comprehensive education

Data from
Education Development
Guidelines, 2007-2013



Challenges of inclusive education

- **How to solve the diversity puzzle?**

The concept of inclusive education has been taken by heart of some educators

Humanist pedagogy brought inclusiveness in the classrooms (Program “Step by step” in preschool and primary school)

Child centered education provided necessary principles of classroom organization and methodology

It has not spread as a common practice in Latvia. Good practice was not disseminated.

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Contradiction between legislation and the practice**
There is a lack of the system – how principles and idea of inclusive education can be implemented in the practice.(Nimante, 2008)
Within the system of comprehensive education it is implemented as education that ensures the integration of children, however, on the basis of education contents that has been developed and is focusing upon the objectives of the special education.(Nimante, 2008)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Teacher's attitude and lack of competencies how to work in the inclusive classroom – main obstacle for implementing an inclusive education in the practice (Nimante, 2008)**

How to deal with diversity?

Teachers think that an **inclusive education is not their business**, it is something extra, it is not a part of their job

Teachers think that they should be **paid for extra work** (like teachers in special schools receive + 20% to their salary)

Teachers **tend to work as they used to or were thought**; in case of problems they seek for external help. (to send a child to a special class, class for pedagogical correction, etc.)

Teachers are prepared to work with whole class, but they are not ready to differentiate the learning process, working with different children groups. (*Dedze, et al, 2004*), to organize differentiated and individualized teaching and learning. (*Ielas bērni Latvijā, 2007/ Children on street in Latvia, 2007*)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Teacher's attitude and lack of competencies how to work in the inclusive classroom – main obstacle for implementing an inclusive education in the practice (Nimante, 2008)**

There is mentioned lack of several competences: not enough skills how to deal with behavior problems, not enough perception of organizational principles of necessary support to child, not enough skill how to motivate students. (*Ielas bērni Latvijā, 2007/ Children on street in Latvia, 2007*)

Teachers are not prepared to work with children who have any problems. (*Ielas bērni Latvijā, 2007/ Children on street in Latvia, 2007*)

The teacher's main argument is the lack of time to plan effective learning process.

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Teacher's attitude and lack of competencies how to work in the inclusive classroom – main obstacle for implementing an inclusive education in the practice (Nimante, 2008)**

Although since 2008 it is possible during the learning process (also in national tests) to provide a child with different support arrangements (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation, *LR Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.264*), teachers very often are either unaware of this opportunity or do not know how to make a necessary adaptations. (*Nimante, Daniela, 2010*)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Teacher's attitude and lack of competencies how to work in the inclusive classroom – main obstacle for implementing an inclusive education in the practice (Nimante, 2008)**

As it was revealed, teachers very often have “bad opinion” on those children identified as “risk” children. As it was concluded, the teacher’s attitudes sometimes are very exclusionary. Several stereotypes have survived on the question of capabilities of students. (*Case-study: pre-primary school, 2008*) For example, one of the teacher’s perceptions is that certain children will never be able to achieve high marks, will never qualify for high achievement. (*Baltic Institute of Social Science, 2008*)

Challenges of inclusive education

- **Teacher's attitude and lack of competencies how to work in the inclusive classroom – main obstacle for implementing an inclusive education in the practice (Nimante, 2008)**

There is a certain gap between the Standards of Teachers and the current situation that is demanding from the teacher new skills, even more – new competences. Sociopedagogical, special pedagogical competencies, psychological competences should be included as the ultimate result in teacher educational program. (Tubele, Nimante, 2010)

Conclusion

The teacher can have a powerful effect on her/his student. (Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, 2001)

So the teacher education curriculum should include much more than just awareness of the problem. Teachers and reality in the classroom are demanding to provide means by which teachers can survive in the diverse classroom.

How to differentiate a pedagogical process?

How to make necessary adaptations in the curricula.

What kind of methodology should be used?

How to deal with behavior problems?

How to motivate a child who has lost hope?

Future questions

- Are there any possibilities to implement a full inclusion?
- Are there any possibilities to break the traditions of historic separation and external differentiation of different children groups by their abilities or problems?
- Will inclusive movement succeed in making a more inclusive comprehensive school for everybody even has before this idea failed for centuries?

Thank you!/ Paldies!

