# Promoting Inclusive Education in Greece: Addressing Challenges in Legislation, Educational Policy and Practice

## Empowering schools to be more inclusive. The role of supportive structures

## Conceptual Paper and Inclusive Education Guidelines

· SRSP ·

Structural Reform Support Programme

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
Υπουργείο Παιδείας, και Θρησκευμάτων

Implemented by:

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Funded by the European Union

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
Υπουργείο Παιδείας, και Θρησκευμάτων

Implemented by:
EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Funded by the European Union via the Structural Reform Support Programme and implemented in cooperation with the European Commission

# PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GREECE: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN LEGISLATION, EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

## Empowering schools to be more inclusive.

## The role of supportive structures

## Conceptual Paper and Inclusive Education Guidelines

## Deliverable 7

# INTRODUCTION

This document presents the final version of the Conceptual Paper *Empowering schools to be more inclusive. The role of supportive structures* written by the Agency researchers as well as the Inclusive Education Guidelines, which include the written inputs provided in the final meeting by the five Working Groups.

Authors: Cecilia Simón, Alan Dyson and Climent Giné.

Special acknowledgment needs to be expressed to Gerardo Echeita (from the Autonomous University of Madrid), the Agency staff[1] for their valuable inputs and reflections; to the national experts[2] from Italy, Portugal and United Kingdom (Scotland) for their contribution and to the Greek colleagues[3] for their questions and reflections.

*This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.*

[1] Victoria Soriano, Eloy Rebollo, Antonella Mangiaracina.

[2] Raffaele Ciambrone, Filomena Pereira, Mary Berrill.

[3] Namely the working group coordinators: Marianna Harzopoulou, Dimitrios Zisimopoulous, Eugenia Niaka, Vassilios Kotoulas, Athina Christopoulou.

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

This conceptual paper is one of the documents that the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) is developing within the action entitled 'Promoting Inclusive Education in Greece: Addressing challenges in legislation, educational policy and practice'. The Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MERA) proposed the action in 2019. The European Commission approved the action for support through the Structural Reform Support Service (now the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support – DG REFORM) in July 2019. The Agency action is providing technical support for the action.

The MERA aims to empower mainstream schools to respond to the diversity of all learners, in line with the shared European vision for inclusive education systems.

The MERA identified five working areas:

- Standardisation of administrative procedures of the centres of Education and Counselling Support
- Learners' educational assessment protocols of kindergarten and primary education
- Learners' educational assessment protocols of secondary education
- Transition procedures for all learners
- Development of an inclusive education guide for all schools.

In accordance with the MERA's requirements, this paper's objective is to promote and guide the reflections of the stakeholders involved in the project. It will therefore discuss five related issues:

Firstly, it will try to define the meaning of inclusive education and suggest some steps that will help to move towards creating a more inclusive system.

Secondly, it will focus on the role of assessment in the inclusive education process, and on the objectives and the principles that should inform it.

Thirdly, it will discuss the importance and role of support in the construction of inclusive environments. To this end, it will analyse different perspectives and systems of support provision and their implications. This will make it possible to identify the support that can best contribute to building learning environments for all learners without exclusions. Particular attention will be paid to the role of external support and to the role of special schools in a policy related to a climate of inclusion. The need to plan and support transitions between educational stages will be reviewed.

Furthermore, the paper provides some suggestions for developing guidelines to support schools and other stakeholders in their work moving forward to a more inclusive system.

Finally, as a summary, some of the key ideas developed throughout the text will be highlighted.

# DEFINING INCLUSION: A RIGHTS ISSUE, AN INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE

**In this section, we will share the meaning of inclusive education as a human right and consider how education systems can move towards becoming more inclusive.**

Contemporary societies are committed to progress towards communities with greater equity and social justice, where differences between people are not a risk factor for exclusion, social or labour discrimination or educational disadvantage (Artiles, Kozleski and Waitoller, 2011; Mitchell, 2017). This commitment has its main roots in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1948) and in covenants and conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly, 2006) that have been added since then. In particular, the European Commission (2021) has encouraged European Union member states to put measures in place to support inclusive education and avoid segregated classes in early childhood education and care establishments and in educational establishments.

Education systems around the world today face the great challenge of 'Ensur[ing] inclusive and equitable quality education and promot[ing] lifelong learning opportunities for all', which is UNESCO Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This also emphasises the need to make a greater effort so that work to meet this challenge reaches those who are in:

> … vulnerable situations, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, those in remote rural areas, ethnic minorities, the poor, women and girls, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, whether as a result of conflict or natural disasters (UNESCO, 2018, p. 2).

Inclusion in this sense is about the rights of all learners in education. It is also a means for achieving other basic rights (Council of the European Union, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019; UNESCO, 2014).

## What do we understand by inclusion?

Although the inclusion movement started from a concern about how learners with disabilities might be educated in mainstream schools, it is now seen much more broadly as a concern for **all** learners. This entails the transformation of the education system in general and schools in particular so that all learners are welcome.

In line with this, it is important to keep in mind that integration and inclusion are different concepts that correspond to different historical moments. Inclusion is not a 'new' term to refer to integration. In fact, use of 'inclusion' aims to overcome the limitations associated with the concept of integration and their consequences.

UNICEF refers to integration as 'where children with disabilities are placed in the mainstream system, often in special classes, as long as they can accommodate its demands and fit in with its environment' (2012, p. 10). In addition to the restricted focus on a particular group of learners, integration was not accompanied by changes in the organisation of mainstream schools, their curriculum and teaching and learning strategies (UNESCO, 2005). Instead, changes tended to be aimed at fitting individual learners into existing structures and practices and focused exclusively on learners with difficulties.

With reference to inclusive education, although there is no international consensus on a definition, definitions that share the same basic dimensions are available from the different international organisations. The proposals of the Agency (European Agency, 2015a) and UNESCO (2017) usefully capture these.

The Agency defines inclusive education as 'the provision of high quality education in schools that value the rights, equality, access and participation of all learners' (European Agency, 2018a, p. 13). The Agency also states that:

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

Likewise, according to UNESCO's definition, 'inclusion is a process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners' (2017, p. 7).

The three terms 'presence', 'participation' and 'achievement' can be explained as follows:

- **Presence**: This is about the availability and accessibility of common educational settings. It refers to the right of all learners to share the same school as their brothers or sisters, their neighbours and their peers.
- **Participation**: This goes beyond the right merely to be present in educational settings and focuses on the extent to which those settings actively welcome all learners and enable them to learn and develop. This is why inclusion is often described as a 'process'. It is about *where* learners are placed, but also about the processes within those settings that enable them to participate and learn fully.

  Participation involves providing equal opportunities to each and every learner to learn, to get involved in school life, to have a voice and be heard, and to take part in decision-making (Messiou, 2019). As UNESCO states, we need to think of inclusion in terms of 'actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected' (2020a, p. 11).

  Following a similar line of thinking, the Agency sees the main outcomes for all learners as being their inclusion and participation in society as active citizens, which in turn entails promoting child belongingness, engagement and learning (achievement) (European Agency, 2016).

  A child's 'sense of belonging' in this sense means that **all** learners must feel at home and welcomed as valued community members in their schools and

classrooms; they need to feel that they are an integral part of their school environment and to be involved in positive and friendly relationships. As Braun says:

> … [the] need to belong is psychologically fundamental to our sense of well-being and has the power to overcome the negative impact that labels of difference and marginalization can have on academic achievement (2019, p. 73).

Therefore, it is linked to the quality of learners' experiences in their schools. It is related to the extent and, above all, to the quality of the interpersonal relationships established in the classroom and in the school. This means that school should offer opportunities for all learners to establish positive relationships.

'Engagement' refers to an individual's internal state involving focus or effort (Imms et al., 2016). It is a basic requirement for meaningful learning. School engagement is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of three dynamically interrelated components within the individual, which respond to variations in environments (European Agency, 2011):

- Behavioural engagement (positive conduct, involvement in learning and academic tasks, participation in school-related activities)
- Emotional engagement (affective reactions such as interest, happiness, identification with teachers and peers)
- Cognitive engagement (self-regulation, flexibility in problem solving, coping strategies).

- **Achievement**: The rights to be present in schools and to participate on equal terms with one's peers are important in their own right, but they also lay the foundation for the right to achieve valued educational outcomes. Achievement in this sense refers, of course, to 'academic' learning (which could include, but is by no means limited to, attaining certain grades in tests). However, it also refers to personal and social development and transition to a meaningful adult life. The focus on learning, in addition, should be set within the perspective of 'learning without limits' (Hart, Drummond and McIntyre, 2014), that is, the belief that all learners can always learn, if appropriate opportunities and conditions are provided.

In these definitions, 'all' really does mean **all** learners, without exclusions (UNESCO, 2020a). However, this is entirely compatible with paying attention at the same time to those who have traditionally been at greater risk of educational exclusion.

The same mechanisms exclude people with disabilities but also others, on account of gender, age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression, incarceration, beliefs and attitudes. It is the system and context that do not take diversity and multiplicity of needs into account (Council of the European Union, 2018; UNESCO, 2020a).

A society with greater equity requires an education system that is inclusive 'such that the education of all learners is seen as being of equal importance' (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). This means a system that is committed to strengthening its capacity to reach out to all learners, and so is concerned with eliminating barriers to the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, ensuring that all are valued and engaged equally (ibid.). Moreover, while this paper focuses on formal education contexts, according to UNESCO (2005), the right to an inclusive education extends to all educational environments including the community, both formal and non-formal.

In making sense of this concept of inclusive education, it is useful to bear in mind two powerful conceptual models. One is the ecological systems approach to development; the other is the social model of individual differences and, particularly, difficulties in relation to education. Both models see the course of children's development as shaped not just by the child's own characteristics, but also by the environments in which the child learns and grows. These environments include the family, the community, wider society and, of course, the school.

The ecological systems approach asks us to look at how these environments create opportunities for the child to learn and grow – or, alternatively, how they might hinder the child's development. In the case of learners regarded as disabled, the 'social model of disability' asks us to look not just at the learner's impairments, but at how the demands and restrictions of school and society interact with impairments to 'disable' the learner. In the context of inclusive education, both of these perspectives focus attention on how schools respond to the widely diverse characteristics of their learners, how they can be more effective in enabling all of them to learn, and how they can support and be supported in this task by families, communities and wider society (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West, 2012; Cummings, Dyson and Todd, 2011).

Diversity is a characteristic of human development. Therefore, inclusive education is linked to recognising and appreciating human diversity (Schuelka, Johnstone, Thomas and Artiles, 2019). It challenges us as citizens and as educators to think about what kind of society we want future generations to live in, how we all want to live together and what values underpin that purpose (Ballard, 2013; Dyson, 2011; Slee, 2019).

From an inclusion perspective, we can see diversity not as a problem but as a value and an opportunity. 'Inclusion cannot be achieved if it is seen as an inconvenience or if people harbour the belief that learners' levels of ability are fixed' (UNESCO, 2020a, p. 20).

Confronting diversity presents a real opportunity to improve our education systems and institutions, including higher education and spaces of non-formal education. It encourages those systems to respond to the individual and group differences that are present in every learning setting and thus makes the educational process more effective for all. In some ways, this is a new challenge, and yet, enabling all learners to learn is what good teachers and schools have always sought to do. Inclusive education, therefore, invites us to identify and build upon the strengths and the inspiring practices that already exist in different education systems. Moreover, developing more inclusive education systems is just part of a wider effort to build more equitable and just societies. In this way, inclusion presents an opportunity to improve the quality of life and well-being of all those involved – not only

the learners but also teachers, families, the school and society as a whole (Kefallinou, Symeonidou and Meijer, 2020).

On the Agency website, it is possible to review the progress different European countries have made in this regard.

## Inclusive education as shared process

The process of building inclusive environments is a collective responsibility, which involves the participation of different stakeholders in the school and in the community.

> Policy must also clearly outline that the effective implementation of inclusive education systems is the shared responsibility of all educators, leaders and decision-makers (European Agency, 2015a, p. 1).

It requires the will and commitment of *policy-makers*. On the one hand, policy-makers must take a clear lead in developing inclusive education. On the other hand, they have to ensure that they make the implementation of inclusion practically possible and that they secure the real support of teachers and other professionals, of parents and of communities. They must provide clear regulation and sufficient, effective and efficient funding (European Agency, 2018b; Ebersold, Watkins, Óskarsdóttir and Meijer, 2019) aimed at promoting quality education for all learners, as well the necessary evaluation of the education system that ensures the appropriate changes and adjustments. The Ecosystem Model of Inclusive Early Childhood Education (European Agency, 2016) highlights the structural factors that influence quality inclusive education. So, policy-makers who are usually responsible for structural factors need to develop structures and processes in collaboration with practitioners to ensure that they work at all levels of the system. Such collaboration can lead to more effective action towards enabling all learners to participate actively in the school.

Furthermore, the *principal and the management team* have a special job of leadership and co-ordination of the different actions carried out in the school, ensuring the conditions that make it possible to implement and sustain this process. It is necessary to ensure the commitment of the *staff*, listening to their voice, their questions and their proposals, so that they can respond to the diversity of learners' needs.

*Support teachers and other specialists* from within and outside the school are necessary to help teachers to plan and implement classroom activities so that all learners can participate. They also facilitate additional and intensive support according to the needs of particular learners, always taking the mainstream classroom as a reference (Giné, Montero, Verdugo, Rueda and Vert, 2015). In addition, *external support services* (such as multi-professional teams) can help the inclusive school by aligning assessment and guidance with the provision of supports aimed at improving the quality of experiences offered to all learners. *Non-teaching staff* (e.g. administrative and service staff) also have a responsibility to make all learners feel accepted and respected.

Likewise, *learners* can play a crucial role in making school a place where everyone is welcome and can succeed (Soulis, Georgiou, Dimoula and Rapti, 2016).

Of course, *parents*, especially those with children facing particular difficulties, have a significant responsibility in building an inclusive school. For example, they can collaborate with teachers to help their children achieve their educational objective. Furthermore, they can participate with other parents in planning activities that help to achieve a positive and confident vision of the possibilities of all learners.

An inclusive school also needs the participation of the *community* (the local authorities and professionals as well as the people of the local community) for the full development of all learners based on community services in the field of sports, arts, leisure, and so on. In particular, it needs the participation of *health and social services staff*, whose contribution is often essential for the education and welfare of learners and their families.

A recent UNESCO report reminds us that:

> Inclusion cannot be enforced from above … Governments should open space for communities to voice their preferences as equals in the design of policies on inclusion in education … Schools should increase interaction within and outside of school walls on the design and implementation of school practices through parent associations or student pairing systems. Everybody's view should count (2020a, p. 21).

Finally, the co-ordination of the different stakeholders, within and outside the school, is necessary to ensure unity of action and shared responsibility.

## What do education systems need to do to become more inclusive?

There are no simple blueprints for inclusion that can be used in every situation. Every education system, *every school*, must seek its own path and set out on its own journey towards inclusion in which even the smallest step can make a difference (Porter and Towell, 2017).

However, it is useful to highlight some issues. The keyword is **change** in schools' cultures, policies and practices. This can come about through a long-term process of innovation in which every step is important. According to UNESCO (2005), inclusive education is only possible with the systemic transformation of education systems and other learning environments to respond to the diversity of learners.

What does 'change' mean in terms of promoting inclusive education? Five issues are particularly important for this purpose:

1. **A process of building consensus around purposes and inclusive values.**

   The development of inclusion requires a sense of common purpose from actors right across the education system. Not least, it requires an education policy consistent with the principles of inclusion (UNESCO, 2020a; 2020b) and aligned with those formulated by government agencies responsible for child and family well-being (Ainscow, 2020). It is essential, therefore, to foster spaces for building consensus around purposes and inclusive values (Nteropoulou-Nterou and Slee,

2019). According to UNESCO (2020b), clarity of purpose is essential to mobilise widespread support.

We must know how to properly communicate this purpose among all stakeholders and all people involved in this process.

2. **The nature of the process: a multi-level and complex process.**

   Changes must take place at different levels (see UNESCO, 2001): at the level of the education system (in terms of funding, curriculum, teacher training or support structures and so on); at the level of the school (its cultures, policies and practices); and at the individual level (teachers and others may need to learn to think differently to understand how they might respond to learner diversity equitably and without exclusion).

   However, this is not an easy job. It is a process that must face multiple difficulties, in terms of changing established conceptions, practices and structures; the turbulence that often accompanies processes of egalitarian dialogue; and the challenge of ensuring the participation, collaboration and support of all stakeholders.

3. **Expectations of change: an on-going and sustainable process.**

   Change must be understood as a *sustainable on-going* process of review and continuous improvement. The conditions under which this process begins should be conditions that can be generalised to all schools (rather than being restricted to a few 'showcase' or exceptional schools).

4. **Evidence-based change.**

   To guide these changes, we need to collect evidence not only at the level of the education system, but also at the school level. As Ainscow points out, 'Evidence is the catalyst for successful change' (2019, p. 16). In particular, stakeholder knowledge of the situation we want to transform is a key issue when planning the changes that must be carried out. It is the essential basis on which the education system can monitor the impact and progress of its inclusion policies.

5. **To promote change it is necessary to support the school and support the teachers.**

   As Porter and AuCoin (2012) point out, strengthening schools is strengthening inclusion. It therefore seems necessary to focus our efforts on strengthening the capacity of classrooms to support and engage all learners (Morningstar et al., 2016). As a consequence, the resources must be located within the mainstream school and configured to benefit all learners (Sailor and Roger, 2005).

   The quality of classroom experiences is closely related to teacher training. In inclusive education, all teachers should be prepared to teach all learners. Inclusion cannot be realised unless teachers are agents of change, with values, knowledge and attitudes that permit every learner to succeed (UNESCO, 2020a). This means paying attention to initial teacher education and teacher professional

development, providing teachers with the necessary competences and recognition throughout their professional career (European Agency, 2012).

Among the questions on which it is important to reflect and which must be consistent with this right to inclusive education, we will focus on two interrelated issues:

- What type of assessment do we need?
- What support do teachers need to equitably achieve the presence, learning and participation of all learners?

# WHAT KIND OF ASSESSMENT IS NEEDED?

**This section will address some key purposes and principles that should guide an inclusive assessment.**

One of the central questions that must be addressed in inclusive educational planning is an assessment of how best to enable the learner to learn (Echeita and Calderón, 2014; Hayward, 2014). Traditional support services often have significant expertise in assessing the needs of learners facing particular difficulties. In a more inclusive, ecological approach, it is still important to know how learners learn, and what helps or hinders their learning. The ecological systems model considers the complex evolving influences on children arising from their interactions and from interrelations between themselves and all the surrounding systems. These systems could be in the school/home, community and region/country (micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-system) in which they function and grow (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994).

This approach involves considering both the characteristics of the learner and the variables of their environment. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the characteristics of **all** learners, including their strengths, capabilities and any barriers. However, it is also necessary to do so in the framework of a wider assessment of the context in which learners are expected to learn, and of the extent to which that context helps or hinders their learning.

The ecological approach emphasises three key elements for assessment: the person's characteristics, including their strengths; the demands of the educational context; and the supports available. The aim of assessment is thus to make it possible to create an environment that is appropriate to the individual's learning characteristics.

Many models of the ecology of children's development have been produced. However, a particularly useful one for inclusive education is the Ecosystem Model of Inclusive Early Child Education (IECE), developed by the Agency in the framework of the IECE project (European Agency, 2017). The model is based on the project data, which identified outcomes, processes and structures for quality IECE. These were then placed into an ecosystem framework. This has the IECE outcomes for learners at its core, surrounded by the pre-school processes and structures in the micro-system; the structural factors in the home and community at the meso-system level; and the regional/national structures at the macro-system level. The model provides a clear, comprehensive and situated portrayal of the issues related to improving quality in IECE. Although the model was intended for IECE, it can equally serve as a framework for planning, improving, monitoring and evaluating the quality of inclusion throughout the entire education system (see Figure 1).

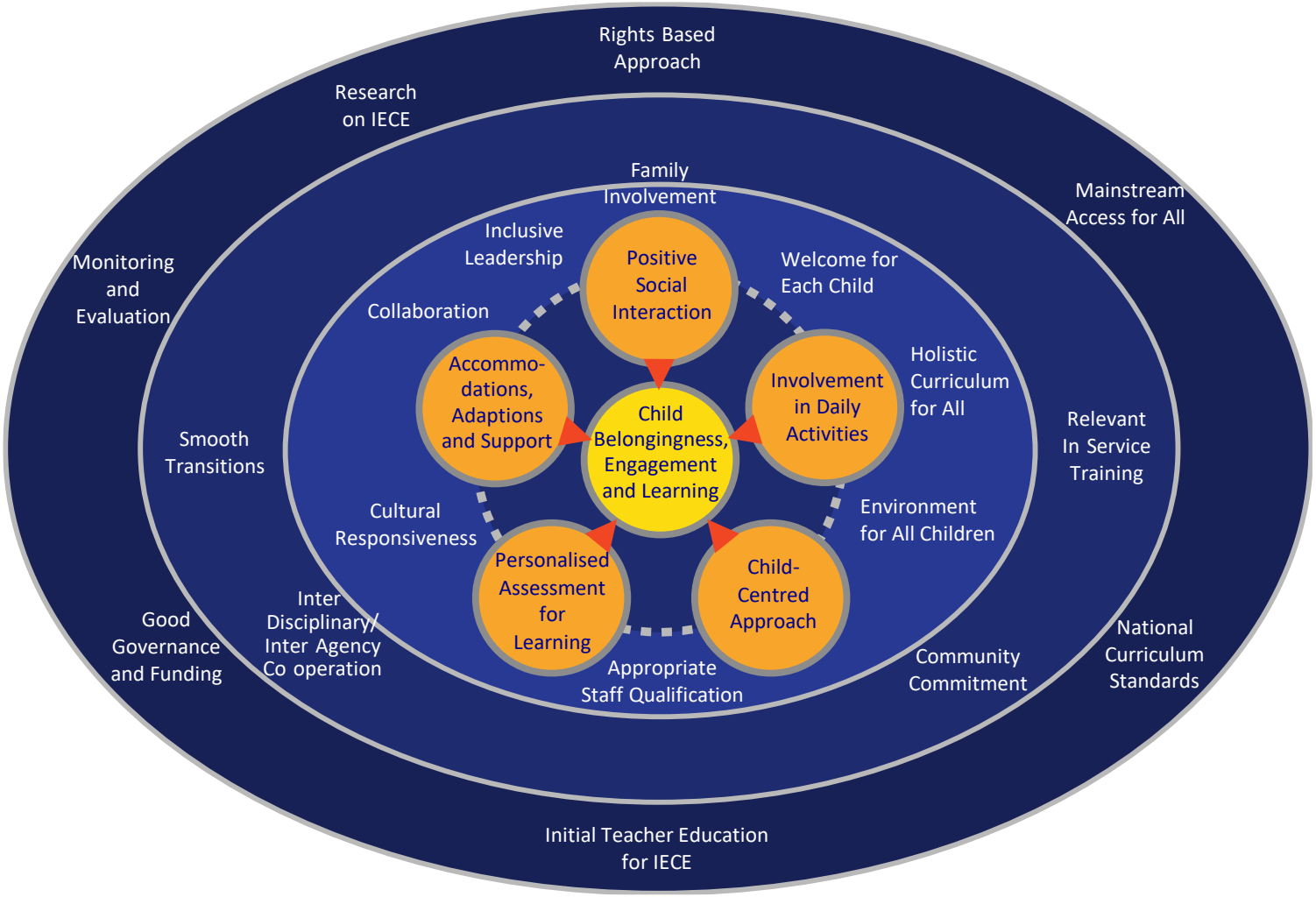


**Figure 1. The Ecosystem Model of Inclusive Early Childhood Education (Source: *European Agency, 2017, p. 37*)**

Research shows that interaction processes between the person and their immediate external environment, in particular with the teacher and peers in the school setting, influence their development and functioning. These processes 'have the greatest impact on the quality of children's experiences and outcomes' in school (European Agency, 2017, p. 18).

In schools, therefore, there needs to be a concern to assess all the reasons why learners might not learn or participate, and how to help them learn. This assessment should relate to both the learners themselves (impairments, for example) and to the context (poor teaching, inappropriate curriculum, inadequate resources, social factors, etc.).

Consequently, when assessing barriers to learning and participation (as proposed by UNESCO, 2020a), it will be helpful to pay attention to the purpose of an 'assessment that is considered to be inclusive' and to some principles that should guide this task.

## Purposes of inclusive assessment

The following purposes are considered crucial for inclusive assessment (UNESCO, 2001; European Agency, 2007):

- Assessment to inform planning and provision. This is the fundamental purpose of assessment: at learner level, at school level, at district level and at national level.
- Assessment for teacher planning. Planning can be more powerful if it is based not just on a record of what the teacher has taught, but on careful assessment of what each learner has actually learned and what helps each learner to learn best.
- Assessment for improving the learning of all learners in mainstream schools. All assessment procedures, methods and instruments must inform the teaching-learning process, support teachers' work, and not just record attainments. It is important not to use assessment to label learners, a practice adopted on the pretext of easing the planning and delivery of education responses. Labels tend to limit learners' potential and ignore the benefits that varied learning approaches can bring to all learners (UNESCO, 2020a).
- Assessment for school development. Assessment may be focused less on the learner and more on the teacher and classroom. In other words, the appropriateness and effectiveness of teaching may be assessed directly.
- Assessment to prevent educational difficulties rather than simply to respond to those difficulties once they have occurred. At the individual level, this means identifying problems before they become serious, at a point where relatively low-level responses can still make a difference. At a wider level, this means identifying any features of the school or system that give rise to difficulties and taking action to improve those features.
- Finally, it is important to avoid using assessment to underpin segregation. Assessment should not be used to separate learners with difficulties from their peers.

## Principles of inclusive assessment

Whatever techniques are used, there are important principles to which inclusive assessment techniques should adhere. These techniques must enable learners to demonstrate their strengths and potential and must not unfairly discriminate between groups of learners. This means that:

- Assessment procedures should serve to inform and promote the learning of all learners (European Agency, 2007). That is, the information collected will make it possible to better understand the learner's learning processes and the quality and effectiveness of educational practices.
- Assessment should be centred around children's rights. Learners' holistic well-being and their current and future quality of life should be central to the assessment.
- Assessments should be accessible and appropriate for those being evaluated. Procedures and criteria should be designed to include the diverse range of learners within the education system (ibid.).
- Assessments must be carried out in the learner's preferred language.
- Assessments should seek to measure progress and outcomes on the full breadth of the curriculum that an education system offers. This includes areas of specific relevance for the diverse range of learners, according to their interests, motivation and abilities (ibid.).
- The assessment process should give learners a voice. All learners must have the right to contribute their own views about their strengths and weaknesses and what would help them learn best.
- Assessment tasks must be meaningful in the learners' own culture.
- The overall assessment approach must consider the individual characteristics of all learners, without exception. The school policy must stipulate that both the instruments and the assessment criteria must fit the characteristics, needs and learning styles of all learners.
- All assessment procedures must be complementary and inform each other in order to avoid multiple, unnecessary assessments.
- All assessment procedures should focus on 'fostering' diversity by identifying and assessing progress in each learner's learning. Recognising that each learner is unique and has different abilities and levels of attainment will help teachers to value the diversity of characteristics and needs of all learners.
- Assessment should, as far as possible, be undertaken in naturalistic settings mainly by teachers themselves.
- Assessment should be understood as a collaborative and multi-disciplinary process, which requires the participation of different agents (teachers, support

professionals, the learners themselves, and other people who, in each case, may be relevant in this process).

- Assessment should be guided by ethical principles. For example, the learner and the family should be informed about it and participate in it, while ensuring the necessary confidentiality (Puigdellívol, Petreñas, Siles and Jardí, 2019).

Thus, while traditional 'special needs' assessment aims to identify the deficits that some learners may have in order to 'remediate' them, inclusive assessment focuses on finding out the characteristics of both the learners (strengths and weaknesses) and the environment (barriers and opportunities). This gives the opportunity to make change and improvement decisions that benefit the school and all learners.

# WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY SUPPORT?

**This section will address different ways to understand and plan support in schools according to inclusive education principles.**

A move towards a rights-based approach requires a change in an educational culture. Rather than focusing on individual support (often based on a medical diagnosis), the system needs to support schools to increase their capability to respond to learners' diverse needs without the need to categorise and label them.

> Instead of seeking to fix learners or provide 'compensatory' support to learners who are different in order to fit them into existing arrangements, schools need to reform their organisation, teaching and the classroom environment in order to respond in flexible ways to all learners and, ultimately, work towards preventative approaches (European Agency, 2015b, p. 5)

The model of support used by schools and education systems guides the actions that are carried out to help learners and the support structures that are needed. It is important, therefore, to clarify what we mean by support, according to a social and ecological understanding of development. Both teachers and policy-makers must share this understanding.

## General principles of 'support'

Traditionally, education systems have thought of support in quite narrow terms, as some additional form of intervention only for learners seen as having clearly identified difficulties. Accordingly, support has been provided for learners seen as having 'special educational needs', and has taken the form of additional teaching, placement in special schools and classes, or assessment and guidance from specialist services. These forms of support have been invaluable for some of the most vulnerable learners in our education systems. However, they are not in themselves adequate for more inclusive systems which seek to respond to *all* learners' difficulties and potential and which value the presence and participation of all learners in shared social and learning opportunities.

An inclusive approach, therefore, requires a broadening of focus in the way we think about support. Put simply, we need to move outwards from a **within-child** focus, where specific forms of support are provided to a targeted group of learners 'with difficulties', to a broader context (**child-and-classroom/school**) focus, where the whole environment in which learners learn and develop mobilises to support all learners.

It is useful to see these two understandings of support as lying at either end of a continuum of approaches. In practice, education systems often contain a mixture of approaches, and movement along the continuum is gradual rather than abrupt.

Nonetheless, each of the two approaches is based on a distinct set of premises. Thus, the actions carried out in one are different from the actions carried out in the other (UNESCO, 1993). It therefore makes sense to understand in more detail how these two foci differ.

### Within-child focus

This has been the traditional and the dominant focus. It has been called the 'medical' or 'individual' perspective. It puts the focus on the individual learner and their characteristics and disorders and offers supports that are basically aimed at correcting what does not work. Table 1 shows this approach's main premises and the actions derived from them in terms of support.

**Table 1. Premises and consequences of the 'within-child focus' approach**

| Premises | Consequences in terms of support |
|---|---|
| If a learner has difficulties in learning, it is fundamentally because they have a disorder, a deficit in their development, or a limitation that interferes with the learning process and that needs to be treated. | Support is based on an assessment aimed at identifying the learner's disorders or deficits and how these might be corrected. This assessment usually produces a diagnosis of the learner's 'special needs' and/or 'disabilities', typically expressed through a label. While this might prove useful for planning interventions, it may also take away opportunities and marginalise the learner. |
| Individual differences are a problem for schools. | Support aims to individually treat each 'difference' through specialist intervention. |
| Only the group identified with 'special needs' is considered to require special support. | The system must decide who needs special provision … and who does not.<br>To this end, assessment typically involves making decisions about who meets the threshold for support. Typically, therefore, support is only available to a portion of learners who are struggling, and then only after a more or less protracted assessment and decision-making process. |
| The 'identified' problems can only be treated by specialists. | Support for these learners must be the responsibility of a special teacher who is recognised to have knowledge, skills and abilities to correct or rehabilitate the problem.<br>Education is organised through two tracks. On the one hand, a mainstream school for the 'normal' learners and, on the other, a special classroom or school for 'different' learners with special aids and special teachers.<br>When learners with 'special needs' are enrolled in 'normal' schools, there is special provision for them, usually special classrooms, with special teachers, where learners spend all day and follow individual education plans with objectives and content separate from the general curriculum. |

Source: *Adapted from Ainscow (1994) and UNESCO (1993)*

### Child-and-classroom/school focus

This approach, which is more characteristic of inclusive systems, focuses in the first instance on what happens in the mainstream classroom. It aims to mobilise all the available resources to promote the participation and learning of all learners. The more effective it is in this respect, the less need for support aimed at certain learners or groups of learners. In this sense, it is important that when teachers plan what they are going to do in the classroom (Sundqvist, Björk-Åman and Ström, 2019):

- they think about activities that make the learning context and demands more flexible so that all learners can have the opportunity to participate and succeed (universal measures);
- they foresee that some learners may temporarily require additional forms of support to enable them to participate and succeed in their learning (additional measures);
- they take into account that some learners may require other educational actions and strategies in the long term, but always building on the universal and additional measures rather than as substitutes for them (intensive measures).

In short, teachers' priorities and efforts should be directed towards planning and implementing universal measures. These measures have a strong preventive nature and are aimed at diversifying and enriching the ways in which learners can access the curriculum, to maximise learning opportunities for all learners. The additional and intensive measures, which can always be revised as necessary, do not involve different educational objectives or a different classroom, but educational and organisational strategies that allow the learning context to be flexible in accordance with the learners' characteristics and development. Table 2 shows this approach's main premises, and the actions derived from them in terms of support.

**Table 2. Premises and consequences of the 'child-and-classroom/school' focus**

| Premises | Consequences in terms of support |
|---|---|
| Difficulties in the learning process are the result of the interaction between the learner's characteristics and the curriculum/learning opportunities provided by the teacher and the school. Problems arise when there is a mismatch between them. | The supports aim to improve the quality of relationships, experiences, and expectations of the learner in the classroom so that they can participate, succeed and be valued.<br>Difficulties in learning become indicators of possible limitations/barriers in the methods of teaching and assessing. |

| Premises | Consequences in terms of support |
|---|---|
| The diversity of learners, in its different manifestations, is seen as being of value. All learners are seen as having the right to be recognised and to receive appropriate responses that enable them to learn. | It is understood that all learners experience difficulties at one time or another in their schooling, and that many belong to groups that face particular challenges (learners with disabilities, learners in situations of poverty, ethnic and linguistic minorities, learners who have difficulties attending school, and so on).<br>Thus, the need to provide support is not seen as an additional task but as an opportunity to improve environments and practices for all. |
| All teachers must assume responsibility for progress and support to all learners, without exception. | Support is aimed at developing better learning opportunities for all. It therefore has to be the responsibility of all teachers; though they themselves need support to achieve this. Enabling teachers to create effective learning environments is seen as more powerful in enhancing inclusion than the provision of specialised interventions for the most vulnerable learners alone. |
| Improving the educational setting, such as the classroom, is the most effective and efficient way to ensure the full development of all learners. | The focus is on making the classroom more supportive of learning. This might mean providing adult support to the learner, but it might also mean helping the teacher to be more supportive, changing classroom practices, using different resources, etc., so that the teacher can reach all the learners without leaving anyone behind. |
| Support systems should be available to all learners in mainstream schools. | Classroom planning aims to allow all learners to participate in meaningful activities to achieve the curriculum's objectives. To this end, the supports contribute to the design and implementation of different ways of organising learning experiences so that all learners can work together and achieve the established objectives. Therefore, support is not understood as the actions of a 'specialist' but as increasing the school's capacity to respond to diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). |

Source: *Adapted from Ainscow (1994) and UNESCO (1993)*

## Moving towards an inclusive school

Next, we will go deeper into two crucial aspects of the move towards an inclusive school: supporting the school to develop a better learning environment and building a broad and systemic structure of supports inside the school.

### Supporting the school to develop a better learning situation

We must build a classroom for **all** learners. As Florian states, it is necessary:

> To think away from teaching approaches that work for most learners existing alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for those (some) who

> experience difficulties, and towards one that involves providing rich learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate and feel they belong (2019, p. 701).

Among other things, supporting the school to develop a better learning situation means:

- advising the teacher, sharing ideas about teaching and learning. This might mean:
  - applying the principles of universal design for learning to the classroom (see Meyer, Rose and Gordon, 2013);
  - offering information in more than one format;
  - suggesting more than one way to interact with learning material and peers;
  - looking for multiple ways to engage learners;
  - offering different ways for the learner to express what they have learned, and so on;
  - thinking in new ways where learners work co-operatively;
- helping the school to plan better opportunities for the engagement of everybody (Simón, Muñoz-Martínez and Porter, 2021);
- finding resources for the school and optimising existing ones (for example, teachers' experience and knowledge; support among learners; family involvement);
- initial and in-service teacher education on inclusive education;
- working with families, valuing, respecting and listening to their voices, and promoting their real involvement as part of the support network;
- working with other agencies in the community;
- providing feedback to policy-makers;
- planning transition processes.

**Building a broad and systemic structure of supports inside the school**

As noted above, support is not the responsibility of a specific professional considered a 'specialist' (Vlachou, 2006). It is necessary to understand support from a much broader and systemic perspective, considering all activities that increase a school's capacity to respond to diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). Thus, we need to build support networks within the school and between the school and the community (Dyson and Raffo, 2007; Kerr and Dyson, 2016).

In this sense, school support goes far beyond the work that specialist teachers do. School support brings together all the measures that a school can deploy to improve its ability to respond equitably to the diversity of its learners. This includes both organisational and didactic measures that will promote the achievement and participation of all learners, not just those labelled as having 'special educational needs'.

Hence, support can be organised and provided in different ways:

- On one side, there are **support forms inside the school**. These include:
    - *Teacher-Child:* support provided by the class teacher. For example, the teacher plans activities thinking of all the learners, being aware of their different starting points, experiences, interests or learning styles.
    - *Children-Children:* learners help each other by working co-operatively.
    - *Children-School:* schools listen to the voices of learners to improve teaching practice and school organisation (Messiou, 2019).
    - *Teacher-Teacher:* teachers help each other, for example in planning their classes, designing materials, being observed by colleagues, and so on (Simón, Echeita and Sandoval, 2018).
    - *Support staff-Teacher:* support professionals guide the teachers' practices to reach all the learners in the classroom (Giné and Durán, 2011) or are involved in co-teaching situations (Porter and Richler, 2011).
    - *Family-Teacher/School:* families are involved in contributing to school development. As Porter and Smith (2011) say, families are the heart of inclusion and can be a support for the school. They are experts on their children and are a good resource to help the school identify what to improve and how.
    - *Families-Families:* families are an important asset in welcoming new families, providing them with support and helping them to articulate their needs and wishes to the school (Vlachou, Karadimou and Koutsogeorgou, 2016). Support networks among families are crucial. All families in the classroom can be resources for and facilitators of inclusion. Therefore, specific actions are required to promote a culture of inclusion aimed at all families in the school.
    - *Principal-Teachers:* a principal or leadership team establishes a clear goal in the direction of inclusion; monitors performance; creates professional development opportunities; supports, motivates and promotes reflection to be more proactive; develops collaborative practices; partners with parents and the community; seeks the involvement of different members of the educational community in leadership, and so on (European Agency, 2018c).
- On the other side, there are **support forms between the school and its context**. For example:
    - *School-School:* different schools collaborate with each other, for instance, to share resources, exchange ideas, engage in joint professional development, share expertise and evaluate each other's practice.
    - *Local community-School:* the local community becomes a resource for the school through the establishment of relationships with professionals or local entities, organisations and experts from universities. These are all

essential resources in the process of support to schools and teachers. In addition, the school becomes a resource for the community, for instance by helping local social and health agencies to work on their priorities, by supporting local families, by offering educational opportunities to adults, by working with local employers to enhance employment opportunities in the area, or by sharing its facilities with the local community (Dyson and Jones, 2014; Dyson, Kerr, Heath and Hodson, 2016).

In summary, one way to think of the task of building forms of support between the school and its context is to see it in terms of creating 'learning communities'. In a learning community, the range of resources available inside the school is enhanced by drawing on the wide range of resources available beyond the school. Sometimes this task is co-ordinated from dedicated resource bases that may support individual learners in flexible ways, but also support teachers and schools.

The next section discusses support structures further.

## Systems of support

This section discusses different perspectives and systems in the provision of supports and their implications for constructing inclusive learning environments:

- The role of external support services
- The role of special schools in a policy climate of inclusion
- The importance of planning and supporting transition from primary to secondary, and from compulsory to post-compulsory education.

### The role of external support services

In addition to the support structures that schools can develop for themselves, most countries' education systems include multi-professional support teams outside the school that help the school work more effectively. In some cases, support teams offer advice and training to principals and teachers on aspects of the curriculum, for instance, or on recent national policy developments. Very commonly, however, there are also 'specialist' support teams that focus on learners with identified difficulties (intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, and so on). Such teams may comprise specialist teachers, psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, and others. Typically, they operate with what we called above a 'within-child focus', assessing learners' 'special needs', delivering additional interventions and perhaps relocating learners to special classes or schools. As education systems move towards a more contextual focus for support, however, these teams begin to operate differently – for instance, helping teachers with their own assessment procedures, advising on how classrooms can be developed to be inclusive of all, and providing teachers with the resources they need to enable all of their learners to learn.

As the focus shifts in this way, **support services need to develop new expertise and knowledge**. They must align with this way of understanding support, focused on the environment, on how to provide and organise supports addressed to the whole school (a

school-wide approach) and to the class as a whole. This requires knowledge and expertise both in the field of assessment (for example, assessment of the context; observation of interaction in the classroom) and of work in the classroom, planning with all learners in mind.

**Support services need to operate at different levels**. Whereas traditionally they have tended to focus on the individual learner and their 'needs', they now need to add other levels of work (though all of these levels interact and are therefore not completely separate from one another):

- Firstly, the classroom level. This involves knowledge about all the classroom factors that might make it difficult for learners to learn: assessing learning environments, and planning to involve all learners from the outset of all activities (universal design).
- Secondly, the school level. This involves helping schools develop as they transform their culture, policies and practices; supporting inclusive teachers; working with families; listening to the voices of learners, families and teachers. It also involves helping to find resources that the school needs and making them available to the school.
- Thirdly, the local community level. This involves working with other agencies; promoting collaboration between different stakeholders; connecting the school with its community.
- Finally, the education system level. This involves feeding front-line information to policy-makers about how the system could become more inclusive, how support provision might be more effective, how funding might be used more inclusively, how education policy might be better aligned with other policies related to the well-being of children and families, and so on.

It is important to keep in mind that 'more' external services are not always 'better'. That is, having many external services for different purposes does not necessarily contribute to more effective support or an improved education system. It can instead be an obstacle to finding ways of helping learners learn because of complicated administrative discussions about competencies and responsibilities between the different services (Daniels, Thompson and Tawell, 2019).

### The role of special schools as resource centres for inclusion[4]

In 2013, the Agency published the *Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education* – *Literature Review*. It includes a chapter on the role of special schools in a policy climate of inclusion that can be extremely useful in rethinking the future of special schools (European Agency, 2013, pp. 47–54)

[4] This is not the only route or alternative that special schools have followed in contexts where their functions have been rethought. See for example proposals in Portugal, Italy, New Brunswick in Canada, and Newham in the United Kingdom (Echeita et al., 2021).

The document states that the move towards inclusive schools for all learners requires a reconsideration of the role and structure of special schools. Traditionally, special education provided specialised education to those learners with the most severe and permanent support needs (either in mainstream or in special schools). Over the years, this practice has shaped structures and forms of work that are often overly differentiated and separated from what is done in mainstream classrooms or what is established in the school curriculum.

Many countries that are trying to develop in a more inclusive direction inherit a well-established special education system that includes special schools. Such schools can in fact make an important contribution to the development of inclusion, if they are used to enhance the resources of the mainstream education system rather than to remove learners from it. However, to do this special schools must engage in some significant changes.

These changes are essentially the result of understanding the mainstream school as a school for all, in which teaching, learning, assessment and support systems are designed and organised according to the characteristics and needs of all learners.

Although most researchers share the opinion that special schools in many countries are undergoing modifications, there are differences in the strategies adopted and the timescales involved. Some authors think that in a time dominated by an inclusive agenda, the idea of special education as a parallel or separate system of education cannot be sustained (Florian, 2005). Some see the presence of special schools as an anomaly in an education system that wants to be inclusive. They argue for them to be totally dismantled (see Dyson and Millward, 2000; Slee, 2011), but for their resources – in terms of funding, personnel and expertise – to become available to the mainstream education system, where they can be used in a more inclusive manner.

Others, such as Baker (2007), Ware et al. (2009) and Head and Pirrie (2007), argue that special schools have a vital position in the development of inclusion. They believe that the future of special schools will probably be concerned with two themes: first, with the education of learners with more complex needs; and second, with providing mainstream schools with their expertise through outreach support.

Baker (2007) maintains that the debate should focus not on whether special schools should be closed, but rather on the quality of learners' educational experience. These researchers have argued for a change in the role of special schools from a provider of segregated education to a partner with mainstream schools in the provision of education. One possible suggestion is the development of the special school as a resource centre for local mainstream schools, with increased collaboration between the mainstream and special schools (Giné, Font and Díez de Ulzurrun, 2020).

There are, in fact, many ways in which such collaboration can take place. For instance, special schools can place some of their learners in mainstream schools and support them and their teachers there. They can work with mainstream schools to create curricular and social opportunities for their learners to meet and learn together. They can work alongside teachers in mainstream classrooms to prevent learners being moved to segregated settings. They can share whatever specialist expertise they have in teaching

through professional development events and processes. They can share materials and equipment with mainstream schools.

There are also many structures through which such collaboration can take place. For instance, special schools can be formally linked with groups of mainstream schools to act as specialist hubs. They can be co-located on the same site or in the same building as mainstream schools. They can be fully integrated so that they become a specialist resource within the mainstream school.

Throughout all of this, it is important for policy-makers and school principals to bear in mind two questions:

1. Are the current arrangements intended to be permanent, or simply a stepping stone on the way to greater inclusion?
2. Linked to this, are those arrangements actually making the system more inclusive, or are they simply reproducing segregated special education in a different form?

Even where special and mainstream schools appear to be fully integrated, unless great care is taken learners may continue to experience segregation.

An effective public communication strategy for the whole population will be fundamental. It will need to focus mainly on the values of inclusive education and the idea of (re-)building a higher quality education system for all (*strengthening the mainstream school*). That 'all' will need to be interpreted as referring to all learners, regardless of whether they have been labelled as having 'special educational needs' (Echeita et al., 2021). We should bear in mind that parents whose children already attend those schools or are currently doing badly in mainstream schools are likely to feel concerned by any change. They have to be reassured (with solid evidence) that their children will do better under the new arrangements, and they need to be fully involved in decisions made about their children.

Similarly, it is important that existing special school staff feel valued and supported throughout this change process. Special schools hold hugely valuable educational resources – not least in their staff's expertise. The aim of the move towards inclusion is not to discard these resources but to find ways of deploying them towards more inclusive ends. Special school teachers will need to be supported in finding new ways of working. Some may need to develop even higher levels of specialist expertise as the populations of their schools change and they find themselves working with learners facing more complex challenges. Others may need to learn how to work in mainstream settings or to develop new specialist skills in consultancy or professional development. As Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua and Frederickson (2007) point out, the skills needed to work across wider settings in this way are not easy to achieve, especially in a short time. A coherent programme of support and development is essential.

In summary, internationally there is widespread agreement that special schools must promote major changes in their aims and role in an inclusive education system and that they can be an important asset in supporting inclusion. Special schools, in general, have knowledge, experience and resources that enable them to become a valuable resource, in a variety of forms, for support in the move towards a school for all. They can advise and support mainstream schools and staff in the implementation of inclusive practices.

**Transition from primary to secondary, and from compulsory to post-compulsory education**

Transitions are critical times throughout the schooling of all learners, both for them and for their families, especially for those facing particular challenges. It is therefore worth considering the meaning of transition in the context of change towards an inclusive education system.

According to van Rens, Haelermans, Groot and Maassen van den Brink (2018), the transition from primary to secondary school is a major event in the lives of young adolescents. It is a significant challenge for the stakeholders involved in the process. In most cases, that process is successful – but in some it is not. Success or failure is the result of at least three sets of interacting factors: learners' personal characteristics, family characteristics and involvement, and school characteristics and practices.

It is certainly the case that some learners are more at risk than others during the transition process. The available research (Hughes, Banks and Terras, 2013; Nuske, Rillotta, Bellon and Richdale, 2019; McCoy, Shevlin and Rose, 2020; van Rens et al., 2018) highlights the complex nature of significant factors influencing risk and protection at transition. It shows that there are factors that can directly or indirectly influence outcomes. For example, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, quality of parental support and disabilities or educational difficulties can directly influence transition outcomes. These effects may also be indirectly influenced (positively or negatively) by family, school and peer influences/relationships or individual/personality factors.

It is also the case that learners who are identified as having 'special educational needs' may be at particular risk (Hughes et al., 2013). For instance, learners with specific learning difficulties perceive lower levels of social support and more peer victimisation (ibid.). McCoy et al. (2020) state that the type of need matters; learners with 'general learning disabilities' and 'intellectual disabilities' are three times more likely to experience poor transition compared to young people without 'special educational needs'. In turn, learners who fail to make a successful transition frequently feel marginalised, unwelcome and not respected or valued by others. This may initiate a disengagement process from school (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000), leading to poor academic achievement and school drop-out, with a negative impact, moreover, on their personal well-being.

Although schools cannot, of course, directly control the background factors that may place some learners at greater risk in transition, there is much they can do through their own practices. For instance, van Rens et al. (2018) find that positive relationships between the stakeholders in the transition process – schools, learners and their parents – can help to overcome the challenges that transition presents. It is therefore important for schools to involve all stakeholders in the transition process, and particularly to listen to the voices of learners and their families (Anderson et al., 2000).

Van Rens et al. (2018) provide evidence of learners involved in interventions to ease the transition from primary to secondary school and the positive effect that those interventions – especially interventions that give learners a voice – have on the transition process. The authors identify three stakeholders (learners, their parents, and primary and

secondary schools) involved in the transition process, who would benefit from a successful transition and can influence it through their actions.

However, although educators can do a great deal to facilitate successful school transitions (Anderson et al., 2000), in many places little effort has been made to work together with learners and families or to establish effective lines of communication. The problem seems to be that stakeholders tend to approach the transition process according to their own perspectives and have differing priorities. Schools in particular tend not to focus as much on their emotional climate as they do on academic requirements. This is particularly remarkable because the literature (van Rens et al., 2018; Coffey, 2013) shows the need to help learners develop their social and personal skills and enhance their self-esteem. It also finds that very close links between primary and secondary school teachers are essential for successful transitions.

Where learners are particularly at risk, schools, of course, will want to put particular procedures and safeguards in place. However, these are likely to be much more effective (and much easier to implement) in a context of high-quality transition processes for **all** learners.

For example, Richter, Popa-Roch and Céline (2019) developed criteria for a successful transition from primary to secondary school for learners identified as having autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Most issues that are of concern for typically developing children are of similar concern for learners with ASD:

- The learner is a respected member of the class.
- Academic achievement continues approximately at the same level.
- The learner and their teachers have a positive relationship with each other.
- The learner knows the new school building and their reference persons well.
- Co-operation and teamwork ensure continuity in the learning process.
- Teachers feel self-sufficient and satisfied in their daily work.
- Parents are familiar with the school and its staff and see it as a good place for their child.

Many school transition interventions have a single and relatively narrow focus. Instead of focusing only on specific learners or passing on information about academic attainments, it is important to develop a comprehensive transition plan for all learners, including those with ‘support needs’.

There is considerable agreement in the research about the factors that are important in planning a successful transition. These include:

- developing a planning team that includes all stakeholders involved (Anderson et al., 2000). In addition, it is highly appropriate for all the stakeholders to share the transition protocol and the materials used;
- identifying strengths, problems and goals (ibid.);

- acquiring the support of all those involved in the transition process (ibid.). A focus on relationships and empathic school personnel can ensure that both learners' and parents' concerns are acknowledged and accounted for when planning transition programmes;
- including how the plan will be evaluated and how it will be improved (ibid.);
- viewing transition as a long-term process in which planning needs to begin early and support needs to continue for some time after the transition point (Richter, Flavier, Popa-Roch and Clément, 2020);
- re-evaluating the support needs of learners who face barriers to learning and participation in the critical periods of the transition process and ensuring proper follow-up;
- ensuring adequate early planning to allow the different professionals involved, such as teachers and guidance teams, to address the specific needs of all learners. This involves the participation of the families and the learners themselves throughout the process, with support focused on both social and academic aspects in their new educational context (Bell, Devecchi, McGuckin and Shevlin, 2017; Nuske et al., 2019);
- ensuring that decisions about school placement are made well in advance for effective planning to take place.

Richter et al. (2020) show that distinct measures could simplify transition preparation. These may include individualised transition planning, timely allocation of school places and teaching assistants, and early orientation meetings involving all stakeholders. Obstacles often seem to be related to a lack of communication or to administrative procedures: unclear expectations, lack of information, late decisions.

Schools can control many aspects of transition. However, their work needs to be supported by wider system-level structures and processes. For instance, there needs to be a system which applies to all schools to collect high-quality data on learners at one educational stage and transfer it efficiently to institutions at the next stage. It should also ensure that the information is used constructively at the next stage. In some cases, this may involve the development of detailed individual plans.

Likewise, there needs to be a system to ensure that types and levels of support that have proved to be effective in one educational stage can be continued at the next stage, and that there is not a sudden loss of support or change of approach.

Finally, the curriculum and pedagogical approaches need to be compatible across stages. There will be differences, of course, but these need to be smooth developments rather than sudden disruptions.

The transition to post-compulsory education involves not only a significant change in setting, but a significant shift in the role of the learner, with increased expectations. For post-compulsory education to be truly inclusive, institutions need to go beyond providing the traditional adjustments, such as curriculum adaptation or small group work, and consider the new needs of the individual. This is especially important in the social and

affective field, and in relation to adult life transition, to ensure all learners can participate fully within their educational setting. Individualised approaches to support strategies and formal transition planning are linked to better adjustment and well-being in the transition to post-compulsory education. The diversity of personal and contextual factors involved in this process must be considered with the different stakeholders involved when planning this transition collaboratively (Talapatra, Wilcox, Roof and Hutchinson, 2019).

In particular, in relation to post-compulsory education transition for learners with disabilities, Nuske et al. (2019) state that parents reported significant challenges associated with systemic issues – such as school regulations, school-family relationships and accessing support. These impacted on their ability to support their family member. They emphasise that an individual and flexible approach to transition support, and increased academic and professional staff awareness and understanding of their needs, are critical to the transition experience of these learners. The most important factors, they conclude, are support from family members, particularly parents, and support from professionals in roles across both the secondary (e.g. career guidance, teaching staff) and tertiary education settings (e.g. disability services staff, counselling, and faculty staff).

Finally, the transition out of education (e.g. into employment) is as important as the transitions within education. The same principles apply, though the process may be more challenging because of the larger number of partners involved.

# DEVELOPING GUIDELINES

Moving forward to a more inclusive system calls for developing guidelines to support schools and other stakeholders in their work. To this end, it may be useful to distinguish between two sorts of guidelines: procedural guidelines and guidelines of principle.

**Procedural guidelines** aim to support schools and other stakeholders to know what they are expected to do in particular circumstances to promote the presence, participation and achievement of all learners in an inclusive classroom and school. They set out mandatory practices, define minimum standards, outline required decision-making processes and so on.

However, practices should always be based on underlying values and principles. In any case, it is impossible for procedural guidelines to deal with every circumstance facing schools and teachers. Consequently, **guidelines of principle** are necessary. As a minimum, they articulate the principles and values of inclusion that the whole system is working towards and with which schools and other stakeholders should align their practices. However, they may also support schools and stakeholders in that process of alignment, not by prescribing what they *have* to do, but by helping them think through how they might develop their current practices.

## Guidelines of principle

Learners, teachers, schools and families are all different and judgments always have to be made in individual cases and circumstances. What leads to inclusion in one situation may lead to exclusion in another.

For instance, strategies that are intended to enable learners to participate in the same activities as their peers – such as additional adult support, adapted materials or access to resource bases – may actually lead to learners having reduced interactions with their teachers, working less closely with their peers, and following a separate curriculum. What matters is whether these strategies are used in a way that supports the principles of inclusion rather than undermining them. Therefore, schools and other stakeholders need guidance that sets out the principles of inclusion. Such guidelines of principle may be combined with procedural guidelines or produced separately, but there must be complete consistency between the two.

There are many forms such guidance might take. The following observations relate to its possible format, content, application and scope.

The *format* might, for instance, simply be a brief statement of the key principles of inclusion and the country's key aims in developing an inclusive system. However, it might also include case studies of actual schools and learners to show how these principles have been implemented in practice.

Regarding the *content*, a guide that aims to contribute to making schools more inclusive should:

- help to build a shared language about what inclusion is (Nteropoulou-Nterou and Slee, 2019);
- facilitate the review of schools' strengths and barriers so that proposed changes are evidence-based (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; UNESCO, 2020b);
- promote reflection on how to create opportunities for everyone to learn and participate in learning environments with their peers (IBE-UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO, 2017);
- outline ways of designing the curriculum and assessment procedures with all learners in mind (UNESCO, 2020b) and, in this way, indicate what an inclusive assessment model might look like.

In addition, to facilitate the implementation and sustainability of these processes in schools, a guide should help schools think about how to promote the conditions that facilitate changes in their culture, policies and practices (Ainscow, Dyson and Weiner, 2013). In the same way, it should create opportunities to analyse what is understood by support and what support is necessary both from the school and from outside to support the teachers (Crawford and Porter, 2004; Dyson and Raffo, 2007; European Agency, 2019; Messiou, 2019).

However (and the same goes for any procedural guidance), simply issuing some form of text alone is unlikely to be effective. **Any text needs to be part of a sustained process of change.**

Therefore, with regard to its *application*:

- schools and other stakeholders need to be supported in using any text and in applying the principles of inclusion to their situations;
- they need access as appropriate to external advisers and to be able to support each other in their development;
- there needs to be some sort of monitoring system so that central government and local administrations know how far the principles of inclusion are being implemented on the ground.

On this last point, it may be that monitoring and support can be combined, for instance, when external advisers monitor schools' efforts and use their monitoring information to support them to do more.

It is also possible for the guidelines themselves to be formulated in such a way that they embody a *developmental process*. For example, they might take the form of an extensive set of questions that schools and other settings can ask themselves about their practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; UNESCO, 2017). However, this must not simply be a 'checklist'. The important thing is that it encourages schools to think deeply about their practices and find ways to make their own situations more inclusive. Teachers might, for instance, be encouraged to work together to carry out research into their practices so that they can answer the questions. They can be encouraged to discuss among themselves the evidence

they find. These discussions should then lead to decisions about how to develop new and more inclusive practices.

It is also probable that guidelines that are formulated by a wide range of stakeholders are likely to be better informed, more easily followed, and more likely to secure support than guidelines in the form of central government pronouncements. The voices of teachers, learners, parents, support services and local administrations are all likely to have a contribution to make.

Finally, a monitoring process is needed as an important part of a systematic process for continuous improvement (Porter and AuCoin, 2012; Porter and Towell, 2019).

One other key issue about guidelines concerns their *scope*. It is entirely understandable that schools are often the focus for guidelines in inclusive education. However, the development of an inclusive *system* requires change at all levels of the system – schools, of course, but also pre- and post-school education settings, support services and structures, local administrations (municipalities, districts, etc.) and central government.

From this systemic perspective, guidelines must be directed at stakeholders across all parts of the education system. Moreover, as Ainscow et al. (2012) point out, they can usefully address how five key conditions might be embedded across the education system:

1. Collaboration between schools in ways that create a whole-system approach
2. Equity-focused local leadership to co-ordinate collaborative action
3. Development in schools linked to wider community efforts to tackle inequities experienced by learners
4. National policy formulated in ways that enable and encourage local actions
5. Moves to foster equity in education mirrored by efforts to develop a fairer society.

## Procedural guidelines

Procedural guidelines follow from the principles of inclusion but deal with the practical issues that schools and other stakeholders need to address to effectively implement those principles. Guidelines of this kind might cover:

- *Regarding the improvement process:* how to ensure leadership, co-ordination and planning during the transformation process and beyond; how to ensure that the decisions and changes are evidence-based; what steps to take to ensure the sustainability of the inclusion process; and how to monitor the process.
- *Regarding the kind of provision each school might be expected to make, particularly for learners who face difficulties:* how schools can ensure that all learners, without exception, are welcome in the school; how to organise spaces, times and supports for all the learners; and how far schools should draw on their own resources before seeking external support.
- *Regarding learning and participation of all learners (how to reach all learners):* what kind of classroom practices to develop so that all learners can participate,

learn and be successful; how schools should assess learners' progress and difficulties.

- *Regarding supports:* how to access additional resources and expertise; what role support services should play; how to communicate information about learners to other institutions as learners make the transition from one institution to another.
- *Regarding in-service teacher education and other professionals:* how to promote professional development of the teaching team and other members of the educational community.
- *Regarding the participation of the different stakeholders:* how to involve school and local community stakeholders; how to promote the participation of families and the rights of parents and carers; how to involve the government (funding, regulations) and the local community.
- *Regarding empowering families:* how to ensure families are not simply involved but also supported and empowered; how to identify the needs of families; and how to promote mutual support among families through family networking and training.
- *Regarding empowering learners:* how to hear learners' voices and take them into account in all assessment and improvement processes.

Finally, the following issues should be considered when writing and using the guidelines. First of all, there is a delicate balance between supporting teachers (and other professionals) on the one hand and taking away their necessary professional judgement on the other. Guidelines, therefore, need to be very specific where they are ensuring basic minimum standards across the system. However, they need to leave scope for teachers and other professionals to respond to the particular learners and contexts they encounter.

Second, guidelines in isolation are unlikely to be effective and their use does not guarantee a sustainable transformation of schools. Teachers and other professionals need support in using guidelines appropriately, and care needs to be taken with the conditions that facilitate the development of inclusion in schools (Ainscow et al., 2013), as noted above.

Third, procedural guidelines must not become divorced from the principles of inclusion. There is a danger that procedures intended to support inclusion will be used for exclusionary purposes. For instance, guidance on assessment may be intended to help schools learn about their learners in order to teach them more effectively, but it may be used to find reasons to remove learners from the school.

Fourth, procedural guidelines must facilitate reflection on the principles that should underpin the actions and help to develop an action plan based on the priorities identified.

# TO CONCLUDE: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

**Lastly, we address some key ideas as a conclusion.**

- Inclusion is both a human right and an international challenge. It benefits everybody: all learners, professionals, the school as a whole, all families and their community.
- The decision process about how to build an inclusive education system is a collective responsibility. It involves the participation of different stakeholders in the school and in the community.
- Parents and civil society organisations need to be involved in the change process and reassured that their children will benefit from it. Explicit strategies are needed that promote good communication with parents, so that they feel informed, know what inclusive education is, and feel fully involved in decision-making processes. Their voices should be heard and they should feel that their voices are heard.
- Policy-makers need to align their decisions with the values of inclusive education. They should use support staff and structures, among other agents, for feedback to review what has been achieved and determine what to improve.
- Every education system and every school must seek its own path and set out on its own journey towards inclusion, in which even the smallest step can make a difference. However, for change to be possible (implementation and sustainability of the inclusive education process) it is necessary to create the conditions that facilitate it.
- Assessment that is considered inclusive should aim to identify, from a socio-ecological approach, how learners learn, what helps or hinders their learning and what supports are needed. It should contribute to orienting teaching practices to facilitate each learner's achievement. This assessment should also prioritise learners' personal and social well-being.
- It is necessary to move outwards from a 'within-child focus', where specific forms of support are provided to a targeted group of learners 'with difficulties', to a broader context ('child-and-classroom/school focus'). This broader context mobilises the whole environment in which learners learn and develop to support all learners. Supports must be available to all learners, so that teaching practices reach all learners and no one is left behind.
- Schools need to develop different expectations of support. They should no longer expect external specialists to 'fix' or remove 'problematic' learners, but look for help from support services to build support networks within the school and between the school and its community. Co-operation among all these stakeholders is a key issue.

- There is a need to create different forms and structures of support that include all learners (emphasising preventive measures, thinking from the beginning in terms of **all** learners – that it to say, a universal approach – and activities that encourage co-operative work).
- Support structures must develop new expertise and knowledge to equitably promote all learners' presence, achievement and participation.
- Resources must be re-directed into schools: if a school is to undertake a more complex and demanding role, it needs the resources that will enable it to carry out that role effectively.
- Existing support teachers and special schools must feel their current expertise is still valued: professionals have accumulated important knowledge and strengths, which have to be capitalised upon for the transformation towards inclusive schools. Professionals must feel valued and supported in the process of change of conceptions and practices that is asked of them.

In short, as UNESCO says, 'The central message is simple: every learner matters and matters equally' (2017, p. 13). If we go in that direction, each person in their field of responsibility will contribute to building a society with greater equity and social justice.

# REFERENCES

Ainscow, M., 1994. *Special Needs in the Classroom: A Teacher Education Guide*. Paris: UNESCO

Ainscow, M., 2019. *The UNESCO Salamanca Statement 25 years on Developing inclusive and equitable education systems. Discussion paper*. International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in education, Cali. en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/2019-forum-inclusion-discussion-paper-en.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Ainscow, M., 2020. 'Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences' *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6 (1), 7–16. doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587 (Last accessed June 2021)

Ainscow, M., Dyson, A., Goldrick, S. and West, M., 2012. 'Making schools effective for all: Rethinking the task' *School Leadership and Management*, 32 (3), 1–17. doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.669648 (Last accessed June 2021)

Ainscow, M., Dyson, A. and Weiner, S., 2013. *From Exclusion to Inclusion: A review of international literature on ways of responding to students with special educational needs in schools*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust. files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED546818.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Anderson, L.W., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S. and Splittgerber, F., 2000. 'School transitions: Beginning of the end or a new beginning?' *International Journal of Educational Research,* 33 (4), 325–339. doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(00)00020-3 (Last accessed June 2021)

Artiles, A.J., Kozleski, E.B. and Waitoller, F.R. (eds.), 2011. *Inclusive education: Examining equity on five continents*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press

Baker, J., 2007. 'The British Government's strategy for SEN: Implications for the role and future development of special schools' *Support for Learning*, 22 (2), 72–77. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9604.2007.00450.x (Last accessed June 2021)

Ballard, K., 2013. 'Thinking in another way: ideas for sustainable inclusion' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17 (8), 762–775. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2011.602527 (Last accessed June 2021)

Bell, S., Devecchi, C., McGuckin, C. and Shevlin, M., 2017. 'Making the transition to post-secondary education: opportunities and challenges experienced by students with ASD in the Republic of Ireland' *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32 (1), 54–70. doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2016.1254972 (Last accessed June 2021)

Booth, T. and Ainscow, M., 2011. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

Braun, A.M.B., 2019. 'Psychological Inclusion: Considering Student' Feelings of Belongingness and the Benefits for Academic Achievement', in M.J. Schuelka, C.J. Johnstone, G. Thomas and A.J. Artiles (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education*. London: SAGE Publications

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Ceci, S.J., 1994. 'Nature-nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective. A bio-ecological model' *Psychological Review*, 101 (4), 568–586

Coffey, A., 2013. 'Relationships: The key to successful transition from primary to secondary school?' *Improving Schools*, 16 (3), 261–271. doi.org/10.1177/1365480213505181 (Last accessed June 2021)

Council of the European Union, 2018. *Council Resolution of the and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027*. (2018/C 456/01). eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218(01)andfrom=EN (Last accessed June 2021)

Council of the European Union, 2019. *Conclusions on Young People and the Future of Work.* 8754/19. data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8754-2019-INIT/en/pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Crawford, C. and Porter, G.L., 2004. *Supporting Teachers: A Foundation for advancing Inclusive Education*. Toronto: L'Institut Roeher Institute

Cummings, C., Dyson, A. and Todd, L., 2011. *Beyond the School Gates: Can Full Service and Extended Schools Overcome Disadvantage?* Abingdon: Routledge

Daniels, H., Thompson, I. and Tawell, A., 2019. 'Practices of exclusion in cultures of inclusive schooling in the United Kingdom' *Publicaciones*, 49 (3), 23–36. doi.org/10.30827/publicaciones.v49i3.11402 (Last accessed June 2021)

Dyson, A., 2011. 'Full service and extended schools, disadvantage, and social justice' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41 (2), 177–193. doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2011.572864 (Last accessed June 2021)

Dyson, A. and Jones, L., 2014. 'Extended schools in England: Emerging rationales' *International Journal for Research on Extended Education*, 2 (1), 5–19. doi.org/10.3224/ijree.v2i1.19531 (Last accessed June 2021)

Dyson, A., Kerr, K., Heath, L. and Hodson, P., 2016. 'From school to Children's Community: The development of Manchester Communication Academy, England', in H.A. Lawson, and D. Van Veen (eds.), *Developing community schools, community learning centers, extended service schools and multi-service schools: International exemplars for practice, policy, and research*. New York: Springer International

Dyson, A. and Millward, A., 2000. *Schools and Special Needs. Issues of Innovation and Inclusion*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Dyson, A. and Raffo, C., 2007. 'Education and disadvantage: the role of community-oriented schools' *Oxford Review of Education*, 33 (3), 297–314. doi.org/10.1080/03054980701324685 (Last accessed June 2021)

Ebersold, S., Watkins, A., Óskarsdóttir, E. and Meijer, C.J.W., 2019. 'Financing Inclusive Education to Reduce Disparity in Education: Trends, Issues and Drivers', in M.J. Schuelka, C.J. Johnstone, G. Thomas and A.J. Artiles (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education*. London: SAGE Publications

Echeita, G. and Calderón, I., 2014. 'Obstáculos a la inclusión: cuestionando concepciones y prácticas sobre la evaluación psicopedagógica' *Àmbits de Psicopedagogia i Orientació*, 41, 3–12

Echeita, G., Simón, C., Muñoz, Y., Martín, E., Palomo, R. and Echeita, R., 2021. The role of special education schools in the process towards more inclusive educational systems. Four international case studies: Newham (UK), New Brunswick (Canada), Italy and Portugal. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional/International Inclusion

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2007. *Assessment in Inclusive Settings: Key Issues for Policy and Practice*. (A. Watkins, ed.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/assessment-inclusive-settings-key-issues-policy-and-practice-report (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011. *Participation in Inclusive Education – A Framework for Developing Indicators.* Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/participation-inclusive-education-framework-developing-indicators (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012. *Teacher Education for Inclusion – Profile of Inclusive Teachers*. (A. Watkins, ed.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/teacher-education-inclusion-profile-inclusive-teachers (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2013. *Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education – Literature Review.* (S. D'Alessio and V. Donnelly, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/organisation-provision-support-inclusive-education-literature-review (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015a. *Agency position on inclusive education systems*. Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/agency-position-inclusive-education-systems-flyer (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015b. *Annex to the Agency Position on Inclusive Education Systems*. Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/about-us/Annex_to_the_Agency_Position_on_Inclusive_Education_Systems.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016. *Inclusive Early Childhood Education: An analysis of 32 European examples.* (P. Bartolo, E. Björck-Åkesson, C. Giné and M. Kyriazopoulou, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/inclusive-early-childhood-education-analysis-32-european-examples (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017. *Inclusive Early Childhood Education: New Insights and Tools – Contributions from a European Study*. (M. Kyriazopoulou, P. Bartolo, E. Björck-Åkesson, C. Giné and F. Bellour, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/inclusive-early-childhood-education-new-insights-and-tools-contributions (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018a. *Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion: A Review of the Literature.* (S. Symeonidou, ed.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/evidence-literature-review (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018b. *Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems: Final Summary Report.* (E. Óskarsdóttir, A. Watkins and S. Ebersold, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/financing-policies-inclusive-education-systems-final-summary-report (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018c. *Supporting Inclusive School Leadership: Literature Review*. (E. Óskarsdóttir, V.J. Donnelly and M. Turner-Cmuchal, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/supporting-inclusive-school-leadership-literature-review (Last accessed June 2021)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019. *Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education: Mapping Specialist Provision Approaches in European Countries*. (S. Ebersold, M. Kyriazopoulou, A. Kefallinou and E. Rebollo Píriz, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/CROSP-synthesis (Last accessed June 2021)

European Commission, 2021. *Proposal for a Council Recommendation Establishing a European Child Guarantee*. COM/2021/137 final. eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0137andfrom=EN (Last accessed June 2021)

Florian, L., 2005. '"Inclusion", "special needs" and the search for new understandings' *Support for Learning*, 20 (2), 96–98. doi.org/10.1111/j.0268-2141.2005.00368.x (Last accessed June 2021)

Florian, L., 2019. 'On the necessary co-existence of special and inclusive education' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (7–8), 691–704. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1622801 (Last accessed June 2021)

Gibb, K., Tunbridge, D., Chua, A. and Frederickson, N., 2007. 'Pathways to Inclusion: Moving from special school to mainstream' *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23 (2), 109–127. doi.org/10.1080/02667360701320770 (Last accessed June 2021)

Giné, C. and Durán, D., 2011. 'Les funcions del professor de suport en el marc d'una escola per a tots.: Conseqüències per a la formació' *Ambits de psicopedagogia: revista catalana de psicopedagogia i educació*, 31, 13–17

Giné, C., Montero, D., Verdugo, M.A., Rueda, P. and Vert, S., 2015. 'Claves de futuro en la atención y apoyo a las personas con discapacidad intelectual y del desarrollo. ¿Qué nos dice la ciencia?' *Siglo Cero: Revista Española sobre Discapacidad Intelectual*, 46 (1), 81–106. doi.org/10.14201/scero201546181106 (Last accessed June 2021)

Giné, C., Font, J. and Díez de Ulzurrun, A., 2020. 'Los centros de educación especial, apoyo a la inclusión' *Ámbitos de Psicopedagogía y Orientación*, 53, 33–47

Hayward, L., 2014. 'Assessment for learning and the journey towards inclusion' in L. Florian (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications

Hart, S., Drummond, M.J. and McIntyre, D., 2014. 'Learning Without Limits: Constructing a Pedagogy Free From Determinist Beliefs About Ability', in L. Florian (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications

Head, G. and Pirrie, A., 2007. 'The place of special schools in a policy climate of inclusion' *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 7 (2), 90–96. doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2007.00084.x (Last accessed June 2021)

Hughes, L.A., Banks, P. and Terras, M.M., 2013. 'Secondary school transition for children with special educational needs: a literature review' *Support for Learning*, 28 (1), 24–34. doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12012 (Last accessed June 2021)

IBE-UNESCO, 2016. *Training Tools for Curriculum Development. Reaching out to all Learners: A Resource Pack Supporting Inclusive Education*. Geneva: IBE-UNESCO

Imms, C., Adair, B., Keen, D., Ullenhag, A., Rosenbaum, P. and Granlund, M., 2016. 'Participation: a systematic review of language, definitions, and constructs used in intervention research with children with disabilities' *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 58, 29–38. doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.12932 (Last accessed June 2021)

Kefallinou, A., Symeonidou, S. and Meijer, C.J.W., 2020. 'Understanding the value of inclusive education and its implementation: A review of the literature' *Prospects*, 49, 135–152. doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09500-2 (Last accessed June 2021)

Kerr, K. and Dyson, A., 2016. 'Networked Social Enterprises: A New Model of Community Schooling for Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Facing Challenging Times' *Education Science*, 6 (20), 1–16. doi.org/10.3390/educsci6030020 (Last accessed June 2021)

McCoy, S., Shevlin, M. and Rose, R., 2020. 'Secondary school transition for students with special educational needs in Ireland' *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 35 (2), 154–170. doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2019.1628338 (Last accessed June 2021)

Messiou, K., 2019. 'The missing voices: students as a catalyst for promoting inclusive education' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (7–8), 768–781. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326 (Last accessed June 2021)

Meyer, A., Rose, D.H. and Gordon, D., 2013. *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice.* Wakefield, MA: CAST

Mitchell, D., 2017. *Diversities in Education. Effective ways to reach all learners*. Abingdon: Routledge

Morningstar, M.E., Allcock, H.C., White, J.M., Taub, D., Kurth, J.A., Gonsier-Gerdin, J., Ryndak, D.L., Sauer, J. and Jorgensen, C.M., 2016. 'Inclusive Education National Research Advocacy Agenda: A Call to Action' *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 41 (3), 1–7. doi.org/10.1177/1540796916650975 (Last accessed June 2021)

Nteropoulou-Nterou, E. and Slee, R., 2019. 'A critical consideration of the changing conditions of schooling for students with disabilities in Greece and the fragility of international in local contexts' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (7–8), 891–907. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623331 (Last accessed June 2021)

Nuske, A., Rillotta, F., Bellon, M. and Richdale, A., 2019. 'Transition to higher education for students with autism: A systematic literature review' *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 12 (3), 280–295. doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000108 (Last accessed June 2021)

Porter, G. and AuCoin, A., 2012. *Strengthening schools, strengthening inclusion*. New Brunswick, Canada: Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/Inclusion/Inclusion.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Porter, G. and Richler, D., 2011. 'Diversity, equity and inclusion: A challenge and an opportunity', in G. Porter and D. Smith (eds.), *Exploring Inclusive Educational Practices Through Professional Inquiry*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

Porter, G. and Smith, D., 2011. *Exploring Inclusive Educational Practices Through Professional Inquiry*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

Porter, G. and Towell, D., 2017. *The Journey of Inclusive Schooling. Advancing school transformation from within*. Inclusive Education Canada/Centre for Inclusive Futures. centreforwelfarereform.org/uploads/attachment/666/the-journey-to-inclusive-schooling.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Porter, G. and Towell, D., 2019. *Advancing School Transformation from Within.* Inclusive Education Canada/Centre for Inclusive Futures. inclusiveeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/07/Porter-and-Towell-Advancing-IE-2017-Online-FINAL.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Puigdellívol, I., Petreñas, C., Siles, B. and Jardí, A., 2019. *Estrategias de apoyo en la escuela inclusiva. Una visión interactiva y comunitaria*. Barcelona: Graó

Richter, M., Popa-Roch, M. and Céline, C., 2019. 'Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Literature Review' *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 33 (3), 382–398. doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2019.1630870 (Last accessed June 2021)

Richter, M., Flavier, E., Popa-Roch, M. and Clément, C., 2020. 'Perceptions on the primary-secondary school transition from French students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their parents' *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 35 (2), 171–187. doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2019.1643145 (Last accessed June 2021)

Sailor, W. and Roger, B., 2005. 'Rethinking inclusion: Schoolwide applications' *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86 (7), 503–509. doi.org/10.1177/003172170508600707 (Last accessed June 2021)

Schuelka, M.J., Johnstone, C.J., Thomas, G. and Artiles, A.J., 2019. 'Introduction: Scholarship for Diversity and Inclusion in Education in the 21st Century', in M.J. Schuelka, C.J. Johnstone, G. Thomas and A.J. Artiles (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education*. London: SAGE Publications

Slee, R., 2011. *The Irregular School. Exclusion, Schooling and Inclusive Education*. Abingdon: Routledge

Slee, R., 2019. 'Belonging in an age of exclusion' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (9), 909–922. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1602366 (Last accessed June 2021)

Simón, C., Echeita, G. and Sandoval, M., 2018. 'Incorporating students' voices in the "Lesson Study" as a teacher-training and improvement strategy for inclusion' *Culture and Education*, 30 (1), 205–225. doi.org/10.1080/11356405.2017.1416741 (Last accessed June 2021)

Simón, C., Muñoz-Martínez, Y. and Porter, G., 2021. 'Classroom instruction and practices that reach all learners' *Cambridge Journal of Education*. doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2021.1891205 (Last accessed June 2021)

Soulis, S.-G., Georgiou, A., Dimoula, K. and Rapti, D., 2016. 'Surveying inclusion in Greece: empirical research in 2683 primary school students' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20 (7), 770–783. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1111447 (Last accessed June 2021)

Sundqvist, C., Björk-Åman, C. and Ström, K., 2019. 'The three-tiered support system and the special education teachers' role in Swedish-speaking schools in Finland' *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 34 (5), 601–616. doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2019.1572094 (Last accessed June 2021)

Talapatra, D., Wilcox, G., Roof, H. and Hutchinson, C., 2019. 'Transition planning for students with disabilities: Perspectives of Canadian and American school psychologists' *International Journal of School and Educational Psychology*, 8 (sup1), 49–64. doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2018.1558136 (Last accessed June 2021)

UN General Assembly, 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III). un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights (Last accessed June 2021)

UN General Assembly, 2006. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 13 December 2006, A/RES/61/106. un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 1993. *Teacher education resource pack: Special needs in the classroom – Student materials*. Paris: UNESCO

UNESCO, 2001. *Open file on inclusive education: support materials for managers and administrators*. Paris: UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125237 (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001402/140224e.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2014. *The Right to Education: Law and Policy Review Guidelines*. Paris: UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228491 (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2017. *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. Paris: UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248254 (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2018. *Global Education Meeting 2018: Brussels Declaration*. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366394 (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2020a. *Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All*. Paris: UNESCO. en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, 2020b. *Towards inclusion in education: Status, trends and challenges. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement 25 years on*. Paris: UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374246 (Last accessed June 2021)

UNESCO, no date. *Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)*. sdg4education2030.org/the-goal (Last accessed June 2021)

UNICEF, 2012. *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS). unicef.org/disabilities/files/UNICEF_right_to_education_children_disabilities_en_web.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019. *Empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education.* undocs.org/A/HRC/40/27 (Last accessed June 2021)

van Rens, M., Haelermans, C., Groot, W. and Maassen van den Brink, H., 2018. 'Facilitating a Successful Transition to Secondary School: (How) Does it Work? A Systematic Literature Review' *Adolescent Research Review*, 3, 43–56. doi.org/10.1007/s40894-017-0063-2 (Last accessed June 2021)

Vlachou, A., 2006. 'Role of special/support teachers in Greek primary schools: a counterproductive effect of "inclusion" practices' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10 (1), 39–58. doi.org/10.1080/13603110500221586 (Last accessed June 2021)

Vlachou, A., Karadimou, S. and Koutsogeorgou, E., 2016. 'Exploring the views and beliefs of parents of typically developing children about inclusion and inclusive education' *Educational Research*, 58 (4), 384–399. doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2016.1232918 (Last accessed June 2021)

Ware, J., Balfe, T., Butler, C., Day, T., Dupont, M., Harten, C., Farrell, A.M., McDaid, R., O'Riordan, M., Prunty, A. and Travers, J., 2009. *Research Report on the Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland.* NCSE Research Reports, No. 4. Trim, Co. Meath, Ireland: National Council for Special Education. ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/4_NCSE_SpecSchlsClas.pdf (Last accessed June 2021)

Secretariat:

Østre Stationsvej 33
DK-5000
Odense C
Denmark
Tel: +45 64 41 00 20
secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office:

Rue Montoyer 21
BE-1000
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 213 62 80
brussels.office@european-agency.org

**www.european-agency.org**

The project was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, in cooperation with the European Commission.