RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Country Report: Austria

AUSTRIA COUNTRY REPORT

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1.   What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?

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2.   What national policies specifically target raising achievement?

Evidence-based investigations, reports and single projects by social initiatives aim to increase engagement and reduce early school leaving.

A number of legislative initiatives aim to reduce attainment gaps between different groups of learners. These include the following:

- **Reform of primary school** (2016; referred to as **RP**): improve system equity regardless of primary language, level of development and special needs.

- **Guidelines for monitoring inclusive quality** (2016; referred to as **Guidelines**): standards for inclusive classroom practice, teaching and school development.

- **Mandatory development of schools** (2015/16; referred to as **SQA**): 'Quality in compulsory schools': contextual development for individual schools, thinking and acting in development circles, negotiation between different system levels, development planning and self-evaluation, target and performance agreements, two development issues (predetermined/free to choose). The fundamental principles are to consider the different levels of development of all learners and to show sensitivity to diversity, as explained in the **Guidelines**.

- **Reform of teacher education** (referred to as **TE**): inclusion is a mandatory component of the curriculum for all student teachers.

- **Inclusive model regions** (2015; referred to as **IMR**): the main approach is to prevent exclusion and to enable the transfer of competences in special needs education, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, cross-linking with national action plans and SQA. Each school's development plans must include measures to increase inclusive quality. Special education centres are to be re-organised into pedagogical advice centres. There must be efficient resource allocation and the quality of special needs assessment must be improved.

- **Reform of secondary 1** (2012; referred to as **NMS**): this consists of supporting various talents in heterogeneous classes, different complexity of tasks and goals (basic and extended), internal differentiation, differentiated feedback, team-teaching, modified performance feedback.

Policies to increase attainment in particular areas, such as literacy and numeracy, include:

- **Educational standards** (2011/12; referred to as **ES**): these include competence orientation and periodic standard assessments. However, learners with SEN are not involved.

Policies to increase the use of learner-focused measures include ES and international tests (Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS, etc.); learners with SEN are not involved.

Policies to improve learner health and well-being include SQA, if chosen by the school.

Policies to provide additional support for schools achieving lower learner outcomes and improve transition between phases of education include RP.

Policies to increase the involvement of parents/local communities include:

- NMS, which includes modified performance feedback; parents are involved

- National action plan: orientation on social space.

3. What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?

These include ES (SEN is excluded), assessment for learners with SEN, and diagnostic language tests.

4. What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?

ES and informal competence measure tests (IKM) for self-evaluation in schools.

5. What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?

SQA.

6. Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?

These include:

- TE
- SQA
- RP
- ES and NMS: in-service training and materials.

7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?

The other policies include:

- decentralisation and increasing local autonomy; this reform is underway, but its effects are unknown.
- curriculum for primary school: this reform in progress, but it consists of a curriculum with differing complexity, including all learners.

8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges

- Inclusion has become a 'matter for everybody and everything', but there are no strict rules for monitoring.
- Decentralisation and autonomy create the risk of reducing national obligations.
- A lot of contradictions are confusing, e.g. personalisation vs. standardisation.

ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Example: Inklusive Schule VS Hausmannstätten (Hausmannstätten inclusive primary school) – 'It's normal to be different'

Contact persons: Edeltraut Foller and Claudia Genser

1. Location of school/learning community and short description of context

Hausmannstätten is a suburb of Graz, with about 3,122 inhabitants. Its population is increasing: inhabitants are working in Graz and living in the community outside the city. Most of the families are prosperous with a high level of formal education. Around 8% of the learners are from a migrant background.

2. Summary information on school/learning community

The primary school has 239 learners, aged from 6–10, in 12 classes. It has five inclusive classes, one of which is a multi-age-class. It is an all-day school with 24 teachers, five pedagogues for leisure education and four assistants.

VS Hausmannstätten is a highly-experienced school and has been an inclusive school for 30 years. Learners with SEN from the local area and the municipality attend the school.

3. Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice

- Inclusive attitude of all
- Well-trained teachers.

4. Data/information available

ES, IKM, inspection reports, results of inquiry of all-day school.

5. Focus of example/work to raise achievement

- Continuous training of teachers to a high level
- Individualisation und differentiation for all learners (not only learners with SEN), learning plans and alternative performance feedback for the last 20 years
- Interdisciplinary co-operation
- Additional resources for first classes
- Regular and obligatory team co-ordinations

- Intensive communication with parents.

6. Summary information about developments/current work in this area

Evaluation by Pädagogische Hochschule Graz (Graz School of Education).

7. Key learning points from this example

- Learners become more self-confident.
- They take a more active part in working and learning.
- There is more self-determination and autonomy among learners.

8. Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)

- ES material
- IKM material.