POLICY AND PLANNING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WITH FOCUS ON CWSN

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Abstract:

Inclusive education involves changing culture of contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, multi-level instructional approaches, and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. Inclusive Education is meant to make schools as centres of learning and educational systems as caring, nurturing, and supportive educational communities where the needs of all students are met in a true sense. Inclusive schools no longer provide "regular education" and "special education". It is a new concept, and is now recognized throughout the world. Inclusive Education stands for equality, and accepts every child with his or her own unique capabilities. This notion is now being accepted by all the international, national and local educational programmes. Inclusion therefore entails the educational system making itself open and welcoming to all. There is a shift in outlook and the services from `care of the disabled child' to `education and personal development' of the child. This paper delves into how teaching and learning is made more effective, relevant and fun for all. Inclusive education effectively includes changing culture of contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, increased attention to diverse student needs.

Keywords: Inclusion, active learning, equity, special education, disadvantaged.

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, those concerned with the field of education have been grappling with the what kind of education to provide for children, especially in the context of varying and different abilities of the students. Traditionally education had come to be separated into two types, namely, general education and special education. Experts and authorities have been increasingly questioning for some time now if this was a correct approach to provide education in a situation where there were children with differing abilities. It had been believed earlier that children with differing needs and especially those with special needs must be given education separately. Owing to lack of knowledge,

educational access and technology, disabled or challenged children were therefore, initially segregated from other children. This had led to the rise of general schools on one hand and on the other, the establishment of 'Special Schools' for the disabled. Since the last three decades this segregation in the education field has come under severe criticism and now a consensus has begun to emerge that instead of continuing with segregated education, inclusive education must be provided. Hence efforts have been made in this direction, particularly during last two decades. Thus, in recent times there has been a shift towards having children with disabilities attend the same school as non-disabled children. The educationists now feel that each child should be allowed to learn in his own way along with his peer group. Hence Inclusive Education came to be provided to the disabled students within the regular education system with some extra support (i.e. resource room, resource teacher etc.). The children with special educational needs now could get education along with regular students. Thus, the concept of inclusion is about school system changes to improve the educational system for all students. It means changes in the curriculum, changes in how teachers teach and how students learn, as well as changes in how students with and without special needs interact with and relate to one another. Inclusive education therefore involves changing culture of contemporary schools with emphasis on active learning, applied curriculum, appropriate assessment methods, multi-level instructional approaches, and increased attention to diverse student needs and individualization. Inclusive Education is meant to make schools as centres of learning and educational systems as caring, nurturing, and supportive educational communities where the needs of all students are met in a true sense. Inclusive schools no longer provide "regular education" and "special education". Instead, inclusive schools provide an inclusive education and as a result all students can learn together. In other words, it is open to all students, and ensures that all students can learn and participate in a common situation and a common milieu. In short, Inclusive Education is a process of enabling all students, including previously excluded groups, to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. Within the schools Inclusive Education is an

approach which aims to develop a child-focus by acknowledging that all children are individuals with different learning needs and speeds and yet can be educated and trained without alienating them from their normal peers. Teaching and learning is made more effective, relevant and fun for all. Inclusive Education is part of development, and development must always be inclusive, which means it must respond to the needs of real

people who are all different. As with all children, disabled children too, have a range of basic needs which need to be met for them to benefit from education and grow and blossom as members of the society. The concept of an Inclusive Education is clearly a shift from the traditional welfare and service oriented practice of special/integrated education that is no longer appropriate or effective given the current agenda based on human rights. Inclusive Education stands for equality, and accepts every child with his or her own unique capabilities. Inclusion therefore, entails the educational system making itself open and welcoming to all. Creating equitable provision for diverse student populations is a key feature of education policy in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. At the centre of this challenge lies the goal of inclusion, leading ultimately to improved social cohesion. Education systems are expected to play their part in these social aspirations and countries have initiated a range of approaches intended to contribute to them. In this regard Education Ministers have asked the OECD to:

"*Review how education and training systems can increase their capacity to include all learners and to achieve equitable outcomes for all, while meeting the increasing diversity of learners' needs, maintaining cultural diversity and improving quality.*" *(*OECD, 2001*a*, p.5)

EQUITY WITH INCLUSION

Meeting the educational needs of students is part of the development of equitable provision in an inclusive society where individual rights are recognised and protected. The *United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child*, for instance, states that "all children have a right to education and therefore the right to make progress. Failure to provide education and create the conditions for individual progress may be a denial of a child's rights". Such thinking underlies the approaches to individual education planning for students with disabilities based on human rights legislation in the United States, for example, the call by Sen (1992) for efforts to ensure that people have equal access to basic capabilities such as the ability to be healthy, well fed, housed, integrated into the community, participate in community and public life and enjoy self-respect has similarities to the rights-based approach of the UN Charter. Denial of these rights or capabilities about children be a precursor of social exclusion (Evans *et al.*, 2002). There are many discussions in the literature on the concept of equity (see Hutmacher *et al*., 2001). There are four basic interpretations of equity which can be applied to educational policy and practice. Demeuse *et al.* (2001), based on OECD (1993):

"• Equity of access or equality of opportunity: Do all individuals (or groups of individuals) have the same chance of progressing to a level in the education system?

• Equity in terms of learning environment or equality of means: Do all individuals enjoy equivalent learning conditions? This question is generally taken to mean: Do disadvantaged individuals or groups benefit from a learning environment equivalent to advantaged individuals or groups in terms of the level of training of their teachers and other staff, and the quantity and quality of teaching resources and approaches?

• Equity in production or equality of achievement (or results): Do students all master, with the same degree of expertise, skills or knowledge designated as goals of the education system?"

Most particularly, do individuals from different backgrounds achieve, over the period of education or training, equivalent outcomes? Do all individuals have the same chance of earning the same qualifications when they leave, and can they do so, independent of their circumstances of origin? This concern about equality in achievement is founded on an ideal of corrective justice (Crahay, 2000) and is inevitably accompanied by a desire to narrow the gap between high and low performers from the start to the end of their programme of education (Bressoux, 1993).

• Equity in using the results of education: Once they have left the education system, do individuals or groups of individuals have the same chances of using their acquired knowledge and skills in employment and wider community life? Rawls (1971) in his *Theory of Justice* argued that to achieve society's equity goals institutions should be biased in favour of the disadvantaged in terms of resource allocation. Brighouse (2000) takes up this issue from the point of view of disabled students. He points out that for many disabled students no amount of additional resources will assist them to achieve the same level of performance as many non-disabled peers. From this perspective, it would clearly be inequitable to give all an education system's resources to disabled students at the expense of the more able. However, some additional resources are required, *e.g.* signing interpretation for deaf students to help them access the curriculum. Thus, when taking account of the whole population of students, the question is how to decide the extent of the available resources that should be provided for students with disabilities. From the point of view of thinking of equity as achieving similar outcomes or reducing the variance of performance across the student population, considering students with disabilities presents a similar challenge: the question is what degree of variance in outcomes is acceptable. A rights-based approach can to some extent side-step this issue since from this perspective all children should be making progress and the problem becomes

how to assess individual rate of progress across the curriculum in a way which can constructively promote learning, in contrast to a single group-based outcome measure. From this viewpoint variance in rate of progress might be a better indicator of the extent to which educational equity is being achieved. Countries aim to meet these conditions by providing additional resources to assist students with the most difficulties. This may be an application of positive discrimination under Rawls' model of social justice. His "difference principle" (Rawls, 1971) argued for institutions to be structured with a built-in bias in favour of the disadvantaged. It is now widely accepted that the education of disabled students could not be achieved without additional resources being made available for them if they are to access the curriculum on anything like an equal basis with non-disabled students. Disabled students need additional resources to be able to profit, as other students do, from "the benefits that education provides opportunities for" (Brighouse, 2000). These arguments suggest that one way to start an investigation of equity for students with various forms of learning difficulty is through analysing the additional resources supplied to meet their needs. This approach has many advantages, especially in developing a method open to making valid international comparisons. First, it makes no strong prior assumptions about the national approach used to gather information on students with difficulties, focusing instead on the criterion that additional resources are provided for some categories of students. Thus, the approach can include those with disabilities, those with learning difficulties or those with disadvantages. This is important, since countries have developed very different conceptual frameworks applying to such students, and therefore they use different models for defining and assessing their needs (see OECD, 2000, 2003). Second, resources and their distribution are important in educational policy making, and drawing together international data on resource allocation can help raise questions about priorities and the effectiveness of different forms of educational provision.

INTERNATIONAL APPROACH ON INCLUSION

Some countries, *e.g.* Spain, the United States, Italy and Canada (New Brunswick) make extensive use of regular classes while others prefer to use special schools, *e.g.* Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands. Some countries make extensive use of special classes in regular schools, *e.g.* France, Finland and Japan. It could be expected that countries with a relatively high proportion of students in the disabilities category may make relatively extensive use of regular classes since presumably

the programmes of such countries would encompass more students with relatively "mild" disabilities. In most of the countries in west, there are more males than females in programmes providing additional resources for defined disabilities, and more boys find themselves in some form of special provision (special schools, special classes or with extra help in regular classes) than do girls. The proportion of males is particularly high in the group with defined difficulties. Several possible reasons can be identified, and each may play some role:

• *Male children are more prone to illness and trauma.* There is some evidence that males are more vulnerable than females throughout the developmental years to the effects of illness and trauma. For example, low birth-weight females have a better chance of survival than low birthweight males (Lemons *et al.*, 2001). Thus, males may have a greater "natural" need for additional support in school. This outcome would be equitable to the extent that males objectively need more support.

• *Males externalize their "feelings" in school more openly than females.* Males may make themselves more likely to be noticed in schools and consequently labelled. Recent examples of extreme violence perpetrated by males in schools highlights the point.

• *Schooling is becoming increasingly "feminised".* The greater proportion of female teachers in schools, especially during the primary years, has been well documented (OECD, 2001*b*). The net result may be that males are having more difficulties in school.

• *The education of males is given greater priority than that of females.* If this view is indeed taken, and leads to more resources being provided to assist males in need than females, the outcome would clearly be inequitable. The gender differences in provision for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages are sufficiently marked for this to be a priority focus when countries examine the basis by which children come to be identified for different programmes, and the long-term consequences of participation in those programmes.

PROVISION IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

It is seen that countries differ markedly in the extent to which students with disabilities are in special schools. In general, only about 1% of 5-6-year-olds are in special schools in most countries, and the proportion starts to rise from around 8 years of age before reaching a plateau around the ages 12-15 and then declining rapidly. These increases in the proportion of students in special schools, which are quite substantial (in Germany it increases six-fold between the ages 6 and 15) presumably reflect the movement of students out of regular

schools and special classes into special schools. The decline beyond around age 15 most likely reflects the fact that most such students do not continue with their education beyond the compulsory years, a conclusion generally supported from the inspection of data on individual categories of disabilities (OECD, 2003).

MAKING EQUITABLE EDUCATION WORK

Brighouse (2000) has pointed out that no matter what level of resources are provided, students with severe learning disabilities are unlikely to attain the same outcomes as nondisabled students. As a result, he argues that equity, conceived of as the attainment of equal outcomes for all students is flawed. Thus, a simple measure of reduction in inequality in performance cannot be considered an adequate indicator of equity. What is needed is a focus on the degree of inequality that is acceptable. At this stage, possibly the best way forward is to consider equity as a process, and in doing so to make sure that full consideration is given to providing additional resources for those who need them during the period of education. Cost-effective methods of achieving equity for all students still need to be fully evaluated. What follows provides some indication of the kinds of ingredients that need to be in place to meet the needs of the most challenging students. Intensive case studies of schools where inclusion appears to be working well, OECD has identified many conditions which are important in developing inclusive schools for students with disabilities. These features also seem generally relevant to improving provision for other students. They are outlined below:

1. Recognising and planning for diversity:

In many countries systems of special education have developed separately in a context of regular schools being unable to adapt themselves to the special needs of certain categories of students. In effect, the educational problem was existing within the student, requiring the student to adapt to the demands of the school. A failure on the part of the student to make this adaptation often led to placement in special provision. The concept of inclusion challenges this practice and puts the onus on schools to show that they cannot meet the needs of the students before separate provision is agreed to. Following 10 years of reform of Spanish schools intended to make them more inclusive, Marchesi (1997) speaking from his experience as Secretary of State for Education, came to the following conclusions. First, it is important to reform the arrangements whereby provision for students with special needs, and especially those with disabilities, has been developed separately; the necessary innovations cannot be fully undertaken if changes to the whole school system are not made. Second, he

stresses that inclusion requires a new perspective whereby the school must be able to respond to all students. This is not just the responsibility of some teachers but of all of them working in the context of the school, which requires rethinking of the school's educational aims, organisation, teaching and assessment methods to properly provide for all students. Third, the education system must be sensitive to changes in society and be able to adapt to them as quickly as possible in new and evolving economic and social environments which include the greater presence of different cultures, increases in racist and xenophobic movements, and changes in family structure and social organisation.

2. Using accountability and evaluation for improvement:

Accountability is a policy issue of great importance which can be furthered by school inspection systems or the comparison of examination results based on nationally (or internationally) standardised tests of academic achievement. These practices can however work against inclusion if for instance they do not take account of students' abilities at school entry. Accountability mechanisms need to focus on the difference that schools and teachers are making, and not just absolute measures of student outcomes. A "value added" perspective on accountability and evaluation can also help justify additional resources in the context of inclusion. In Italy, for instance, inclusion is predicated on smaller class sizes and smaller class sizes are associated with improved performance for students with disadvantages. The benefits of smaller classes for disadvantaged students have also been shown in the United States (Nye, 2001).

Accountability procedures may also have the incidental effects of discouraging schools from taking on children who are likely to perform poorly in examinations, of encouraging schools to expel children they find difficult to teach, or of tempting schools to omit children with learning difficulties from testing programmes. Thurlow (1997) refers to some two-thirds of students with disabilities in schools in the United States as having been excluded from the 1992 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (US Federal Law now requires their inclusion). Other countries also point out that flexibility in the examination process is important for inclusion and schools should be willing to keep disabled students in school beyond the normal school leaving age if this is requested.

3 Professional development of staff:

The professional development of teachers and other staff through pre-service and in-service training is a key issue in the development of inclusive schooling systems. A survey of training programmes in OECD countries (Magrab, 1999) identified this area as high priority, an immense challenge and in need of considerable extension. Teachers must develop what

Marchesi (1997) describes as interest and competence in inclusion. By interest he means teachers' attitudes, their theories about the education of students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages, and their willingness to contribute to their education. Inclusive attitudes should certainly be formed during initial training, and renewed and extended throughout teachers' careers. By competence he is of course referring to their skills. Based on studies done, the following practices are particularly important for making inclusive education effective: working as the special education co-ordinator; team teaching; developing mutual support between teachers; effective collaboration through discussion and a problem-solving approach; the pedagogy of curriculum differentiation; the development of individual education programmes; and the monitoring of progress. Developing the skills required for such practices were prominent features of the training programmes in Canada (New Brunswick) and Italy. In Canada (New Brunswick), for example, all initial teacher training courses included assignments designed to introduce trainee teachers to working with children with disabilities. Once appointed to a school, regular class teachers had on-going access to further in-service training for working with students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages. In addition to the training of teachers, the co-ordinated development of other professionals to work in inclusive settings is also required (Magrab, 1999).

4.External support services:

In all the OCED countries, schools received substantial additional support for their work with students with disabilities. There are a wide range of professionals identified by countries who serve in support roles. These include: peripatetic teachers with a wide range of specialisations, special needs co-ordinators, teacher assistants and aides, school counsellors, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, youth service psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and doctors and nurses. Parents and voluntary bodies are also often closely involved in supportive roles. In Germany and Sweden, young people can meet their national service obligations by working in special needs settings rather than in the armed forces. Important roles are also played by local education authority advisers and officers who work with schools specifically in the field of special education. These services provide front-line support for students and teachers and are also closely involved in the formal assessment arrangements that all countries undertake to allot additional resources to, and make special arrangements for, students with special needs. In using these additional services to develop effective inclusive provision it is important to consider how they work with the school. One possibility is that they work with the students themselves on a one-to-one basis isolated from

the school. Another is that they support schools and staff efforts to developing effective approaches to teaching disabled students in the school. This latter approach was strongly preferred and the schools visited were working in this way usually having identified a teacher or teachers to co-ordinate support for special needs students in the school. Nevertheless, there were still large differences between the schools in the approach taken by external support services, particularly in the degree to which they explicitly saw themselves as encouraging and supporting schools to solve their own problems.

5. Within-school support services:

The extent to which class teachers can provide support for special needs students depends not only on their own skills and experience but also on the way in which the organisation of the school helps them to become familiar with the students' needs. In Germany and Italy, for instance, classes containing students with disabilities are smaller than those without such students. In Denmark and Iceland, class teachers stay with the same children during the children's year by year moves up the school. Training given to individual teachers to support needs can then be used efficiently across many school years. In effective examples of inclusive practices class teachers and their assistants have access to a network of support provided within the school by teachers with advanced qualifications and associated expertise in special education. In the United Kingdom, special education co-ordinators have the task of co-ordinating the school's work in supporting special needs students. They may assist class teachers in setting individual targets within the context of flexible lesson plans and help in assessing progress. These specialist teachers may also adapt curriculum materials designed to help successive cohorts of children with learning difficulties at stages of the syllabus subjects. In addition, they from time to time withdraw children for individual work or to cope with crises. At their best, these special education specialists were fully integrated into the school, both sharing in the teaching and being members of the school's management team. Their contributions to school management could be as problem-solvers, not just with respect to special education, but regarding problems generally. They might also have some expertise in aspects of school life affecting all students, for example in assessment of students' progress or in staff appraisal. Where these roles were developed fully, the posts of special education specialists were highly regarded, much sought after, and recognised as stepping stones to school leadership positions.

6 Co-operation between schools:

Co-operation between schools is often a feature of good practice in inclusive schooling. In developing inclusive practices, the skills of special school teachers are frequently used to

support and train teachers in regular schools through outreach practices. The smooth transition of students between the various phases of schooling is also viewed as important. Schools can help children by assuring a free flow of information about those who are moving from one stage of education to the next. Some systems have the flexibility to allow teachers to cross the primary/secondary boundary and carry on giving support to disabled children in the new setting. In few schools in Germany, for example, primary teachers follow their students for short periods into the comprehensive secondary school in order to help them settle into their new environment.

7 Parent and community involvement:

The involvement of parents in the successful education of students with disabilities is well documented in the literature (*e.g.* Mittler, 1993). Parents may be involved in schools at many different levels. In Canada (New Brunswick) for instance, they are strongly represented in the school governance process and can influence school policy. But parents may also have a more direct role. They are often closely involved in the decision making concerning assessment arrangements and in Denmark they can effectively prevent certification of their child as in need of special education. Elsewhere they can support children in classroom work in areas like reading and mathematics. However, in other countries, parents may have relatively little involvement. Community involvement also seems to be an important feature of effective inclusion, although its incidence varies greatly across countries. In Colorado, in the United States, accountability committees ensure community involvement in the development and evaluation of school improvement. An on-line database forms part of the work of PEAK (Parent Education and Assistance for Kids) the local branch of which also publishes Colorado-based resources for parents and educators wanting to promote inclusion. In Colorado, too, America corps volunteers work in the classroom with children at risk. In Italy, in Rome, professionals and parents and other members of the community work with churches and other voluntary agencies in local provision. The benefits of wider community involvement are also seen in professional development programmes. In Colorado again, education department, university and parent body representatives had collaborated to implement a project providing in-service training for school leadership teams in developing strategies for inclusive education. In this endeavour they catered for ethnic, cultural and intellectual diversity.

8 School organisation and management – opportunities for whole school development:

Educating students with disabilities is an issue for the whole school, not just for individual teachers. Furthermore, planning successful inclusion should go beyond the teaching of traditional subjects and to give close attention to the social and affective side of development. For example, under the whole school approach in the United Kingdom, head teachers and the school management should be committed to innovations especially as they are accountable for how the school works, its ethos and in motivating teachers to work for all the children on the roll. In a school in UK the head of the upper secondary school and the chairman of the Board of Governors both had experience and strong interest in education for special needs students. Coherence of practices and pastoral care were of particular interest. They had implemented an "assertive discipline" programme across the school adhered to by all teachers. When students transgressed the rules of acceptable behaviour there were constructive punishments which often involved parents. The programme was also associated with rewards for good behaviour on a group and individual basis. If students felt that they had been unfairly treated there were appeals procedures. There was evidence that this approach was very useful in preventing "exclusions" from school, since it provided a means of dealing with poor behaviour before it crossed the threshold of unacceptability.

 In the United Kingdom, pastoral care refers to that aspect of school life concerned with the students' general non- academic well-being. The benefits of a whole-school approach are also evident in decisions about student allocation to groups. In a particularly effective UK school careful attention was given to allocating students to tutor groups so that they would be with other tolerant students and more accepting teachers. The learning support team in the school also provided a haven for students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages which was extensively used at recess times. A secondary school in Colorado ran the school within a school called "Choice". This alternative provision, housed in the same school building, gave students more control over their curriculum and teachers reported that it had proved very effective for students, including those with disabilities, who struggled with the structure of the regular school.

9 Curriculum developments:

Curriculum development is another key area in sustaining inclusion and meeting diversity. In Australia for instance, the National Strategy for Equity in Schooling (1994) identified curriculum and assessment as key areas for development for special needs students. In New South Wales, outcomes based education (a structured approach to education stressing the outcomes students should achieve in making progress through the curriculum) has been

emphasised and the State's Board of Studies has developed generic life-skills courses to complement the key learning areas of the regular curriculum and to help in the development of individual education programmes. In the United Kingdom and Canadian examples special needs students follow the standard curriculum and teachers make the necessary adjustments for them. In Colorado, a federally funded "systems change project" (Supporting Inclusive Learning Communities) was being used to improve schools through changes in the way they were functioning via action research methods. Progress towards agreed goals is reviewed monthly. In one high school, affective education was part of the curriculum for students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages, and covered areas such as socio-emotional development and conflict management. Life-skills and functional independence were also stressed for those with severe learning disabilities. The use of teachers' time has also been subject to change where inclusive schooling has been effectively implemented. In Italy, for example, primary teachers work on modules comprising two teachers per three classes or three teachers per four classes, with each teacher taking responsibility for a cluster of subjects for two or three years. This approach offers the possibility of providing coherence in curriculum planning for diversity, and enables the teachers to follow students' progress over an extended period. A key feature of curriculum planning is the provision of teaching materials. In no country was this carried out comprehensively through central services or via private sector publishers, and teachers were left to develop their own supplementary materials. In the United Kingdom, for example, teachers supplemented the regular curriculum with additional resource material especially prepared for each curriculum subject, which allowed for classroom based differentiated teaching. These materials were made accessible to all teachers in the school.

10. Classroom organisation:

In delivering inclusive education classroom teachers usually had the assistance of at least one other adult who might be assigned for students with moderate or severe disabilities, but who would also work in the classrooms more generally. Often these posts were part-time and appealed to certain people, mothers with children of primary school age for example, whose other activities make it difficult for them to take on full-time employment. A common pattern is for the assistant to work in the class with special needs students planning work within the context of the general curriculum. It would be targeted to meet specific needs, with progress being monitored regularly and the plan adjusted in the light of progress made, *i.e.* an application of formative evaluation. Research showing the benefits of small classes for disadvantaged students was noted earlier.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating equitable provision for an increasingly diverse student population is a key policy objective for OECD countries as well as other countries around the world. This is an area in which cross-national analysis can be particularly helpful in informing policy development and debate since there are markedly different national approaches to defining and assisting students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages. These cross-national differences, which in many respects are greater than the differences that exist within countries, have great potential for improved understanding about what works best for different types of students. These differences, though, make the task of international analysis particularly challenging. The indicators presented in this paper are the result of on-going work to improve their coverage and comparability. Nevertheless, even with their limitations, the indicators can help raise questions about current policy and practice. The facts presented provide some indication of the extent to which countries make additional resources available for students with defined disabilities, difficulties or disadvantages. Countries vary widely in the numbers of such programmes and the proportions of the student population involved. These differences reflect a range of factors, including identification procedures, educational practices, comprehensiveness of provision, and perceived policy priority. Countries also vary substantially in the extent to which they include students with disabilities in regular schools or in special schools, and whether they mainly use special classes within regular schools or students are integrated into regular classes. This is a difficult area in which values as well as empirical evidence are strongly contested. It was argued that equity considerations lead to the position that, wherever possible, students with disabilities be educated in regular, mainstream schools rather than in separate institutions. It is inevitable that the educational and social experiences of special schools and regular schools will be different, and this could well be inequitable in terms of students' access to post compulsory education, the labour market and the wider society. Countries which make extensive use of special schooling need to continually monitor how children come to be referred to them, and at the nature and consequences of the provision in such schools. As well, countries that place a strong emphasis on inclusive education in regular schools need an on-going evaluation process to ensure that its objectives are being achieved. The information based on the studies of schools of various countries identified several dimensions that appear to be important in making inclusive education work (OECD, 1999). In broad terms, these ingredients are all found to be

important for allowing schools to become learning organisations in the sense that they could adapt themselves more easily and quickly to a wide diversity of student needs, including those with severe disabilities. The resultant flexible provision can provide additional support to all students in the school, and Manset and Semmel (1997) have shown how non-disabled students also benefit from this extra support.

Countries provide considerable additional resources for special education needs and this may be positive discrimination aiding the goal of greater equity. For many students these additional resources can be quite substantial. Using student-teacher ratios as a proxy of costs indicate that students with disabilities in special schools are provided with at least twice the resources of their non-disabled peers in regular schools. Effective inclusive provision requires that these resources are maintained in regular schools which enrol students with disabilities. One thing is clear. If extensive and expensive provision is made in special schools, the skills of the staff concerned cannot at the same time be used in regular education. For instance, in Italy where there are very few special schools, the use of team-teaching in regular schools with disabled students has improved the resources available to all students. Introducing such reforms is of course not straightforward, but the steady accumulation of experience from OECD countries is showing how it can be done. Despite these encouraging results, there is still a great deal more work ahead. National databases are often inadequate for more sophisticated analyses, especially regarding linking types and costs of provision to outcomes measures for students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages. The OECD and other countries are working to help strengthen the information and research base in this vital policy area.

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