Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education

Literature Review

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

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PREAMBLE

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (the Agency), in a survey of member countries, identified the organisation of provision for learners with disabilities in the mainstream sector as a key area for investigation. The Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education project was therefore set up in 2011 to address the key question: how are systems of provision organised to meet the needs of learners identified as having disabilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006)? The project focuses on inclusive settings within the compulsory school sector and aims to provide descriptive information on how countries organise and evaluate provision for learners with disabilities, to explore key issues and challenges and, finally, to provide information on innovative ways forward and on the management of change.

The project considers the following themes:

- inclusion as a quality issue that is about responding to the diverse needs of all learners;
- effective ways to strengthen the capacity of the mainstream sector to be inclusive and unlock the potential of the special sector as a resource;
- systems for collaboration and networking to provide multi-agency support to learners as an integral part of their education;
- the effective and efficient use of resources for identifying needs and targeting support.

The project activities include visits to five Agency member countries to investigate the above themes and follow-up seminars to debate priority issues at national and European levels. Further information on project activities and outputs can be found on the Agency website at: http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/organisation-of-provision

This literature review addresses some of the main issues raised by Agency Representative Board members and National Co-ordinators in early project discussions and provides an overview of research relating to the project's key question. It includes information from Agency reports and recent research literature and examines how educational organisations can be structured to respond to the different requirements of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings, rather than focusing on the organisation of provision based on individual deficits.

In alignment with Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006), member countries have identified inclusive systems as the best way for learners with disabilities to exert their right to education. In realising this right, member countries have agreed that all persons with disabilities should be able to receive the support they need within the mainstream education system. This may include support measures tailored to individual needs, as well as reasonable accommodations to the environment. With these considerations in mind, this report focuses on the systems of support that are provided to the individual, to the school and to the education system as a whole.

Within this report, the term 'learners with disabilities' is used rather than 'pupils with special educational needs'. Agency member countries agreed, for this project, to align with the UNCRPD which, in Article 1, states:

> *Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others* (United Nations, 2006).

This highlights the need to move away from an approach to disability that focuses on learner variables to an approach that takes contextual variables into account.

Although the term 'inclusion' is used in this review to refer to ways in which education systems can be changed to meet the needs of all learners, rather than to address the specific needs of learners with disabilities, the Organisation of Provision project does focus in particular on this group of learners. As explained elsewhere (see D'Alessio, Donnelly and Watkins, 2010), this is because forms of exclusion become more visible and discrimination is brought to the fore when dealing with this group.

This literature review firstly discusses the different interpretations of inclusion and other key terms presented in the literature and used by Agency member countries. It then summarises the conceptual framework that underpins the Organisation of Provision project and gives a description of the methodology used to conduct this literature review. The literature review focuses on the issue of change, including some contradictions and tensions that hamper the process of change, ways to strengthen the capacity of mainstream schools and the changing role of special schools. Information is included on effective ways to collaborate and develop networks to provide quality multi-agency support to learners as an integral part of their education. The final section of the review presents different funding approaches and considers how they may impact upon the development of inclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent Agency work (*Teacher Education for Inclusion across Europe*, 2011a; *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education – Recommendations for Practice*, 2011c) suggests that inclusion is a widely debated issue across Europe. The UNCRPD (2006) is providing a force for change, with countries beginning to replace categories linked to special educational needs (SEN) and disability with ideas of barriers to learning and participation.

The Council of the European Union (2009; 2010) stresses the importance of ensuring that learners with disabilities not only participate fully in the learning process in mainstream settings, but that they are able to achieve. In the 2010 Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, for example, the issues of equity and excellence are addressed as fundamental goals for education. Therefore the participation of learners with disabilities is not limited to their access to schooling, but to successfully taking part in the learning process.

Despite this policy direction, it is important to acknowledge that a number of issues need to be addressed in order to support, in particular, the process of change from special to mainstream schooling. The World Health Organization (WHO/World Bank report, 2011) notes that many learners with more severe disabilities and/or with behavioural difficulties continue to be educated in special schools or in special units/classrooms within mainstream settings. The reasons for this are many and complex, but include teachers' attitudes, values and competence and also the views of parents, many of whom remain in favour of special schools, seeing them as better equipped to meet their children's needs. Although such perceptions are understandable, they represent a major challenge for the further development of inclusive education as countries consider how to respect individual differences and provide learners with disabilities with the support that they need to attend the mainstream classroom without labelling and stigmatisation (Goodley, 2011).

In a time of economic recession, the allocation of resources that will safeguard each learner's equal entitlement to quality education in mainstream settings becomes crucial. It is important to discuss education not just in terms of placement and the provision of additional resources, but also in terms of achievement and participation in learning (Agency, 2009d; 2011b).

Although learners may be educated in mainstream classrooms, research indicates that they are not always exposed to educational experiences that improve the quality of their learning (Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training – NESSE, 2012). For example, they may spend a limited amount of time with their peers without disabilities and/or essentially be educated in alternative settings (e.g. special units or classrooms) with poor quality teaching and a narrow range of curriculum experiences. This issue becomes particularly relevant for learners identified as having profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), whose needs often require the involvement of social and health services as well as education (Agency, 2011d).

Mainstream schools often find it difficult to provide high quality support for learners with disabilities. In some contexts, the systems of provision to support these learners and their families lack flexibility, failing to take local contexts and cultures into account. Learners' needs may not be identified and assessed until late in the learner's school career and parents may not have enough information about the services available, while bureaucracy and lack of funding may create further barriers. Further difficulties arise as the number of

learners identified as having disabilities and being referred for statutory assessment increases – sometimes as a way for schools to obtain more support both in terms of human and economic resources.

Mittler (2012) argues that the provision of support and services, as indicated in the UNCRPD (2006), is a key factor for the development of an inclusive society. Nevertheless, he notes that people with disabilities are still experiencing barriers in accessing services and resources. In general, without effective services, even the most innovative forms of curriculum and instruction are deemed to fail (Giangreco et al., 2012).

Reyes (2011) argues that the provision of support is a fundamental part in the exercise of human rights for people with disabilities. He divides human rights into first-, second- and third-generation. The first generation refers to basic rights, such as freedom of movement, that cannot be exercised unless people with disabilities are guaranteed third-generation rights, such as the right to basic equipment (e.g. wheelchair), and access to trained personnel (e.g. rehabilitation professionals). Reyes positions education as a second-generation human right which requires support, assistant personnel and resources, depending on the type of impairment. Reyes further suggests that states must enshrine the right to support services in positive human-rights norms (i.e. according to laws set down in legal documents) in order to put people with disabilities in a position to exercise their rights.

This review draws on recent literature to examine the issues raised above and effective ways to organise systems of provision to meet the needs of learners with disabilities in mainstream education.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section provides information about the methods used to compile this literature review. The purpose of this review is to summarise the most relevant contributions and debates in the area of organisation of provision to support the inclusion of learners with disabilities. The information presented is primarily descriptive and aims to discuss existing literature in the chosen area with a critical approach (Hart, 2003). The coverage of the literature is not definitive; nevertheless, it attempts to cover all the main arguments in the area of organisation of provision to support inclusive education, taking into account sources from 2000 onwards, with a few exceptions for highly relevant works.

The methodology used consisted of a collection and a synthesis of all available documents on the topic of organisation of provision to support inclusive education. Information was collected through an extensive search of academic articles, chapters, books and Internet resources. The titles of the readings were selected after a systematic search of databases, such as ERIC, and library catalogues, such as the British Library and the Institute of Education, University of London Library. Searches included journal sources, such as SwetsWise, SAGE and ScienceDirect. Searches of Internet sources were also carried out via general search engines, such as Google Scholar. Other searches included conference papers and proceedings and the investigation of relevant websites in the area of inclusion and special needs education. Further documents were also selected from bibliographical lists found in relevant articles and books and/or based on suggestions from project participants.

The literature review was firstly based on a search of key terms drawn from early project discussions involving representatives from member countries. These terms focused on the organisation of support for the development of inclusive education and the new role of special schools. The descriptors used for the retrieval of articles and books included key words such as ‘inclusion’, ‘organisation of provision’, ‘support for mainstream settings’, ‘systems of support’, ‘special needs education’ and a series of relevant synonyms.

This review includes reference to previous Agency works and it also incorporates international documents, reports and projects produced by the European Commission, European Parliament, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and World Health Organization.

Early in the project, a request was sent to Agency member countries to send abstracts of relevant literature to be included in the review. The focus was, in particular, on work generated in languages other than English. Literature was received from five countries.

Since the literature available on this topic is extensive, some inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The review mostly includes studies that highlight the positive aspects of the development of inclusive education through the organisation of support systems. Preference was also given to works that discussed the process of ending segregation to favour the inclusion process of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings. The review does not include works that assess the effectiveness of psychological, medical or rehabilitative interventions on specific groups of learners with disabilities (e.g. behavioural disorders or severe impairments). Nevertheless, the specific needs of such learners are considered in the development of a support system that takes into account the education of ‘all’ learners without the need to categorise learners into separate groups.

The language used for the search was English, although, as stated above, the literature review also includes some relevant work in other languages. Given the large amount of literature available, this review is not exhaustive; however, it attempts to map the key debates and ideas in the area of the organisation of provision to support inclusive education.

3. CHANGING TERMINOLOGY

One of the key issues for recent Agency work has been the use of consistent terminology around the area of inclusion and diversity. The Teacher Education for Inclusion project concluded that any reform must include clarification of the language that is used when referring to inclusion and diversity (Agency, 2011a). This section examines the recent development of the key terms to be used in the Organisation of Provision project.

3.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education has been recognised by the European Union as one of the most important educational imperatives for the development of quality and equity in education. There is an increasing acceptance among all countries, supported by Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), that inclusive education offers the best educational opportunities for learners with disabilities.

Inclusion can mean different things depending on the various contexts and people involved (Cigman, 2007; D'Alessio and Watkins, 2009) and the range of approaches used to 'operationalise' inclusive education also varies widely, not only among different countries, but also within the same country (e.g. within regions, provinces or schools). Nevertheless, setting out a definition of inclusive education for the Organisation of Provision project is important as it clearly influences policy implementation, the type of support that is provided and the ways in which mainstream schools are organised (Carrington and Elkins, 2002; NESSE, 2012).

Since the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) identified the mainstream classroom as the best setting for the education of learners with SEN, the concept of inclusive education has undergone a series of modifications in the way in which it has been interpreted, with important implications for practice.

The confusion that exists around the term 'inclusion' arises from the use of both the narrow and broad definitions described by Ainscow, Booth et al. (2006), among others (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010; Armstrong et al., 2011). Whilst the former is concerned with the promotion of inclusion of specific groups of learners into mainstream settings, the latter focuses on the capacity of the education system to respond to the diversity of all learners. These two definitions are further supported by the work of UNESCO (2003; 2008; 2009) and by the *World Report on Disability* (WHO/World Bank, 2011).

Artiles and Dyson (2005) make the case that inclusive education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and suggest that it is not possible to provide a unique definition that can be used in different contexts and in different countries. Slee (2006) warns of the risk that inclusive education can be used as a new term for special education, with discourses that continue to label and stigmatise some learners.

International literature increasingly discusses inclusion as a process that aims to overcome barriers to learning and participation (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Armstrong et al., 2011). According to Ainscow (2008), inclusion can be described as: a process aiming to respond to diversity; being concerned with the identification and removal of barriers; being about the presence, participation and achievement of all learners and involving a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement.

Mitchell (2005) uses sixteen different propositions to distinguish between inclusive education as a concept which is concerned only with learners with disabilities and their placement in mainstream schools, and a concept that goes beyond education to include considerations about employment, recreation, health and living conditions and therefore concerns transformations across all levels of society.

Finally, MacArthur stresses that inclusion is not ideology and concludes that such arguments put an end to open discussion about the rights of all children to a quality education and about how regular schools can 'move, change and develop in positive ways to improve all students' learning and participation' (2009, p. 19).

In conclusion, the Organisation of Provision project will, in line with other recent Agency work, adopt the definition used by UNESCO, whereby 'inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination' (UNESCO/International Bureau of Education, 2008, p. 3).

3.2 Provision and systems of support for learners with disabilities

Within this literature review, the term 'provision' includes all forms of support that may help the process of participation in education for learners with disabilities: curriculum, assessment procedures, forms of pedagogy, organisation and management and resources that contribute to the development of supportive systems that promote inclusive education.

Systems of provision to support learners in inclusive settings vary a great deal and no one model of support is likely to work in all contexts and meet all needs (WHO/World Bank, 2011). Nevertheless, there are some overarching principles that need to be shared by all countries: that support should be provided in the community and not in segregated settings (UNCRPD, 2006) and that support and services should be person-centred (WHO/World Bank, 2011) so that individuals with disabilities are more involved in the process of decision-making concerning the support they need (UNCRPD, 2006; Agency, 2011e). Finally, support should take account of permanent human relationships and should be provided throughout an individual's life (Ebersold, 2012), not only in terms of additional material and economic resources at a specific point in time (Lacey, 2001; Medeghini and D'Alessio, 2012). A supportive system, which promotes the development of inclusive education, has to align with a principle of inclusion that moves away from a debate on how learners fit into schools or services towards designing approaches and services around every child (Royal National Institute for Deaf People – RNID, 2007).

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for the Organisation of Provision project is largely influenced by a human-rights approach to disability in education (Rioux, Basser and Jones, 2011; United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF, 2007; 2012), supported by the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNCRPD (2006).

Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes reference to children with a disability and their right to a full and decent life in conditions that promote dignity, independence and an active role in the community. It stresses that governments must do all they can to provide free care and assistance to these children.

Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006) says that States Parties should provide an inclusive education system at all levels, ensuring that children with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability and that they are able to access inclusive, quality and free education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live. Furthermore, persons with disabilities should receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education, with individualised support measures in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

In this section, the key strands of the conceptual framework are outlined, including: the move from a needs-based approach towards a greater recognition of children's rights; building capacity within the system to support learners and prevent failure; and, finally, developing resilience, both in individual learners and families and in the education system as a whole.

4.1 From needs to rights

While many organisations and individual commentators provide strong justification for the development of more inclusive approaches (for example, Council of the European Union, 2009, 2010; UNESCO, 2003; 2005; 2008; 2009; European Commission INCLUD-ED project, 2007; 2009), recent work by the Agency on the Raising Achievement for all Learners (RA4AL) project (Agency, 2012a) emphasises that research (for example, Artiles et al., 2006; Rioux et al., 2011) and the frameworks provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNCRPD (2006) mean that such justification should no longer be necessary.

While identifying the positive impact of inclusive placements on learners with disabilities (see Curcic, 2009; Vianello and Lanfranchi, 2009; 2011; Giangreco et al., 2012), the RA4AL project also identified a lack of robust research evidence at the system level to support the move from the 'why' to the 'how' of inclusive education.

Lindsay (2007) acknowledges that a major driver for inclusion has been the concern that children's rights are compromised by special education that segregates them from typically developing peers and mainstream curriculum and educational practices. He notes that:

> *… both evidence for differential effectiveness of processes and outcomes, and compliance with the values and aspirations of society are factors in policy development, including the determination of children's rights* (p. 2).

While the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNCRPD are not mandatory for signatory countries, they have nevertheless made governments more accountable for policy and practice concerning the education of learners with disabilities and support for a

rights-based approach, reminding countries that educational policy and initiatives should always include the voices of all learners.

Enforcing a rights-based approach, however, remains a major challenge (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007). In addition to a supportive political and economic environment, all stakeholders, including school staff, parents and different community actors, must accept their own responsibilities and work to remove all barriers to participation. In order to do this, they must understand the need to move from a 'within-child' or 'needs-based' model of disability, which locates the problem within the learner, to a 'social model' of disability, which goes beyond an emphasis on social policy or charity to identify institutional barriers at all levels (political, economic, social and educational) and ultimately put learners' rights at the forefront of planning and provision.

Bourke (2010) states that an examination of existing assumptions underlining disability and inclusion is crucial in order to modify thinking. Without a paradigmatic shift to provide practitioners with an opportunity to reflect and examine their assumptions about inclusion and the beliefs that inform teaching and learning, it would be very difficult to implement the inclusion process (Carrington and Robinson, 2004; 2006, Slee, 2006; Bourke, 2010).

In the last two decades, however, the field of inclusive education has undergone fundamental changes (Oliver and Barnes, 2012) due, at least in part, to a shift away from a medical view of learners' needs towards an ecological view of disability (Lacey, 2001; Medeghini and D'Alessio, 2012; Ebersold, 2012) that focuses on the way in which social contexts are structured. Such an approach requires a reconsideration of the difficulties that learners with disabilities face, not just as a result of their impairment, but also as a consequence of the way in which schools and provision within schools are organised (Ainscow, 1999). This changing conception of inclusion in education is discussed further by the Agency in the Inclusive Education in Action Framework (Agency, 2010b).

Thomson and Russell (2009) note that the organisation of general educational provision is increasingly implicated in the exclusion of pupils. Norwich (2008) also argues that there is a need to think in a more sophisticated way about provision and analyse the way in which mainstream schools are currently structured, while Slee (2006) stresses the need to go beyond a conceptualisation of support intended only in terms of a re-distribution of additional resources for individual learners to investigate the quality of that support.

Needs-based approaches to education therefore do not appear to have safeguarded a quality education for all learners. Ainscow (2005) notes that:

> *… even the most pedagogically advanced methods are likely to be ineffective in the hands of those who implicitly or explicitly subscribe to a belief system that regards some students, at best, as disadvantaged and in need of fixing, or, worse, as deficient and, therefore, beyond fixing* (p. 117).

A human-rights approach to disability requires a fundamentally different pedagogical approach to one rooted in deviance and a defective view of difference (UNICEF, 2012). Armstrong and Barton (2001) and Oliver and Barnes (2012), among others, emphasise the rights of learners 'within' education rather than only 'to' education and Ainscow (2008) emphasises the need to ensure that pupils' experience of learning is of high quality and that they actively participate in the learning process. Within such an approach, individual needs are not forgotten, but the emphasis is placed on how such needs arise and how they can be met, going beyond functional and medical analyses (Thomas and Loxley, 2001).

4.2 Building capacity, preventing failure

The conceptual framework recognises that a move towards a human-rights approach requires a change of cultural paradigm, moving the debate from the organisation of provision in terms of individual support (i.e. based on medical diagnoses) to an analysis of how systems of support are arranged in order to make mainstream schools more accessible and capable of meeting the requirements of all learners. 'Systems of support' therefore refers to systems that build the capacity of mainstream schools, rather than to the process of distributing additional resources.

Frattura and Capper (2007) indicate that teacher and system capacity should be built with a focus on the prevention of student failure, rather than on remediation (Sodha and Margo, 2010). Following this view, inclusive systems should develop forms of teaching and learning that prevent learners from 'falling out' of schooling and enable learners with disabilities to participate fully in the learning process in mainstream classrooms, rather than focusing on forms of remediation and compensation of individual needs that leave systems and schools untouched (D'Alessio, 2011).

MacArthur (2009) notes that a social justice position gives recognition to the fact that children enter schools in unequal situations and that schools need to compensate for this. Higgins, MacArthur and Kelly (2009) further propose a social justice strategy, which consists of three elements: agency, competency and diversity, or 'a, c, d'. When disabled children are provided with the opportunity to exercise their *agency*, demonstrate their *competence* and transform and affirm notions of *diversity,* then inclusion is more likely to occur in the classroom.

Jackson et al. (2010) suggest that, to avoid denying access to the learning opportunities provided to other students and due to changing definitions of disability, there is a need to take a presumption-of-competence approach when considering educational programmes for students with extensive support needs. They state:

> *This perspective requires that we start with a premise that a student can meet expectations associated with the education of typical peers rather than using the more prevalent starting point that their disability makes such an expectation inherently unrealistic* (p. 177).

They also express the view that diversity serves as a 'pedagogical asset' of effective educational systems (Nasir et al., 2006, p. 498).

4.3 Developing resilience

A final strand of this conceptual framework relates to the development of resilience in individual learners and in schools and education systems. The literature on resilience in the area of psychology (Cyrulnik, 2009; Malaguti, 2005) usually emphasises how people, including learners with disabilities, have developed new strategies to cope with and overcome difficult situations (derived from their functioning or from environmental barriers). Such studies have usually focused on the individual and the environment's influence on the person and their ability to cope with adversities, without investigating the impact of social conditions and processes (Ungar, 2012).

The concept of resilience used within the Organisation of Provision project attempts to go beyond individual factors to include aspects related to the family, the wider community, the school and the culture, as well as the economic, social and political forces that may impact upon the life of a learner. The emphasis is not on personality traits and individual qualities,

but rather on the social ecologies that surround individuals and how communities (including schools) can facilitate them (Ungar, 2012). Consequently, this literature review will focus on how to develop resilient education systems and strengthen the capacity of mainstream settings to reach out to all learners, including those identified as having high support needs. This involves a change in focus from support required for specific categories of learners, such as those with social and emotional behavioural disorders and with profound and multiple learning disabilities, in order to avoid unintended and detrimental consequences such as labelling and stigmatisation.

In educational terms, a resilience-promoting school (and classroom) can be seen as a form of support that empowers learners with disabilities (Ungar, 2012; Sharma and Sharma Sen, 2012). Ungar (2012) stresses the importance of mapping the effects of schools and environments on individuals and Sharma and Sharma Sen (2012) indicate that this approach reverses the earlier tendency to see the child as defective and needing assistance.

An ecological understanding of resilience sees disability as a serious disadvantage to the extent that the environment fails to provide the necessary support (Sharma and Sharma Sen, 2012). Ungar (2012) suggests that ecological resilience requires both the agency of the person, but also access to and availability of resources and support by the environment. Schools that are resilience-promoting and capable of meeting the needs of all learners become a key focus in the organisation of provision for inclusive education.

In conclusion, this conceptual framework sees the need for a paradigmatic shift from a focus on individual deficits (i.e. medical model of disability) to a new conceptualisation of disability (i.e. a social model and human-rights approach to disability) that challenges the way in which educational systems are currently structured. This conceptual framework will be fundamental to developing an understanding of how provision to support the inclusion of learners with disabilities can be developed, addressing the dilemma of meeting the requirements of all learners without marginalisation.

5. INCLUSION AS A PROCESS OF CHANGE

This section reviews the literature on the changes needed to support inclusive education and considers some of the issues around the transfer of effective practice.

Many authors (see Carrington and Robinson, 2004; Allan, 2008; Bourke, 2010; Ainscow and Sandill, 2010) report that inclusive education requires major organisational and structural change. Lambe and Bones (2006) say that the means by which a policy of inclusion is introduced can be viewed as either 'additive', i.e. new methods and philosophies are applied to existing practice, or 'generative' – where there is a complete re-think of policy assumptions and practice.

5.1 School transformation

The process of inclusive education requires both a transformation of mainstream settings and the way in which they have been conceived, organised and structured, as well as a reconsideration of the role of special schools.

A positive attitude towards change is crucial, but this does not necessarily result from the application of new techniques or the introduction of new organisational arrangements in schools (Ainscow, 2007), and policy-makers often struggle to change schools by using new regulations and legislation (Pijl and Frissen, 2009). The literature indicates that the consequences of such action is not real change – schools may show that they comply with the new guidelines (for example, by welcoming learners with disabilities into their classrooms), but only through minor adjustments (e.g. creating resource rooms and special units within the mainstream) and without really transforming the way in which schooling (i.e. teaching and learning approaches) is structured.

School change requires a deeper transformation, which entails a change in thinking (Ainscow, 2007). Specifically, this involves engagement in dialogues with and among staff, learners, families and local communities, the ability to challenge taken-for-granted beliefs and practice and the rejection of forms of understanding that pathologise difference. It further involves a reconsideration of teachers' assumptions about teaching and learning, a new vision for school leaders and, in general, a deep cultural change at the level of the school staff and of the local community (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Watkins, 2007; Council of the European Union, 2009; Agency, 2011c). Hargreaves (2012) states that school transformation that is self-generating and sustainable requires attention to the deep cultural capital that underpins the life of individual schools, partnerships and the school system as a whole.

Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman and West (2011) have shown how education systems are under pressure to implement change, not only to become more inclusive, but also to respond to increasing demands to raise learners' achievements and fight against school failure. However, schools are complex organisations (Pijl and Frissen, 2009) and so, therefore, is the process of changing them. Pijl and Frissen divide organisations into two main types: the *machine bureaucracy organisation* and the *professional organisation*; the former is characterised by strong centralised regulation, with standardised instructions and job descriptions, essentially performing simple and formalised tasks. The latter is characterised by a more complex type of work performed by different professionals that apply their problem-solving knowledge to individual cases. Although many schools have the characteristics of a professional organisation, they are still fundamentally run as bureaucratic organisations, hence provoking a series of tensions and conflicts that impede

the development of innovation and experimentation. In addition, schools have embedded assumptions, values, attitudes and routines that resist change (Burstein et al., 2004) and make it difficult for teachers to amend their roles and responsibilities.

5.2 Models of change

Regarding the change process, many researchers have put forward models of change (e.g. Bridges, 2003; Kotter, 2006). Thomson (2010), reviewing the literature around whole-school change, suggests that the idea of change as design is 'one way of dealing with the tangled knot of purposes, processes and outcomes' (p. 17). The complexity of the school-change process is also outlined by other authors, for example, Brooke-Smith (2003) and Fullan (2005).

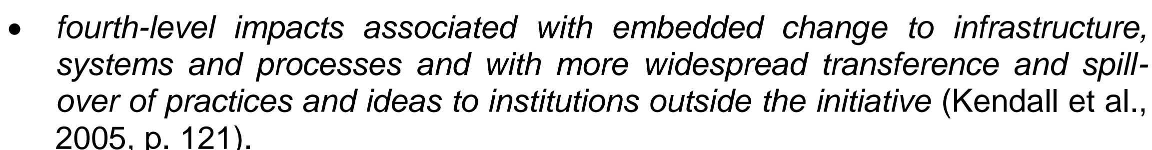
Thomson (op. cit.) stresses the need to understand schools as organisations and identifies four organisational metaphors which could be used to guide thinking about school change:

- *School as a rational machine*. In this model, change occurs through the application of policy 'levers', for example via the implementation of an external programme and an evaluation of its effects in the school.
- *School as an ecological web.* This model draws on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1989) who theorises layers of influence which connect the school to wider contexts. As everything is inter-dependent and inter-connected, change to part of a school may impact on the whole system, making it hard to identify key influences.
- *School as a system*. Here, 'systems can be tracked and patterns established' (Thomson, 2010, p. 22). A school system can be regarded as an instance of complexity theory and ways of thinking/making meaning and acting that facilitate or hinder change can be found, as in the systems-thinking approach of Senge (1990; Senge et al., 2000).
- *School as a sense-making, collective intelligence*. In this model, change is conceived as an intervention in the process of meaning-making and understanding that is translated into daily practice. Change is triggered by collaborative actions and new ways of talking and making sense of what is happening.

What is clearly crucial is that schools debate the proposed outcomes and purpose of change and, in particular, address the following questions with the totality of the student population in mind: Who is this change for? Who benefits from it and how? (Hacsi, 2002).

Recognising the multi-layered nature of change, Kendall et al. (2005) report on a four-stage hierarchical model:

- *first-level impacts that change inputs (for example infrastructure, staffing and material resources, staff expertise and skills) and institutional processes (such as partnership operations, approaches to curriculum planning, and the development of strategies for providing support for all pupils)*
- *second-level impacts, where the first-level changes begin to make their presence felt on the key players within the main initiative institutions, to bring about change in their everyday experiences*
- *third-level impacts, where changes begin to have measurable impact on the outcomes for the target population(s) of schools, teachers, pupils, employers and the community*



- *fourth-level impacts associated with embedded change to infrastructure, systems and processes and with more widespread transference and spill-over of practices and ideas to institutions outside the initiative* (Kendall et al., 2005, p. 121).

In all models, change should be driven by learners' experiences. Listening to the voices of the learners and/or their representatives is an essential step in the process of planning inclusive classrooms and schools (RNID, 2007; Agency, 2011e; Richards, 2012). In particular, their input should draw attention to any way of working which might create environmental and social barriers to participation and engagement (Richards, 2012). Although change is inevitably slow, 'there are signs that the journey is progressing: that there is a historical pulse behind inclusive education and that it is gaining in strength' (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004, p. 190).

5.3 Key factors supporting change

Harris and Chrispeels (2006) and Harris (2008) suggest that external interventions are rarely capable of supporting sustainable change and improvement, especially for those schools located in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. Schools vary widely and the reasons for their underachievement can equally be many and varied. Many writers suggest that mainstream schools must be strengthened internally before they rely on external support (e.g. Ofsted, 2006; Ware et al., 2011).

Many studies have identified the key factors necessary to promote school change. For example, Ainscow (2005) identifies a series of change levers that can lead towards greater inclusion. He points out that collaborative inquiry appears to be the most effective change strategy with school practitioners collaborating with academics/researchers, who are external to the school and can act as critical friends. The role of critical friends is central to promoting innovative ways of thinking and impacting upon traditional views that impede the development of inclusion (Agency, 2009a). Ainscow also draws on Wenger's idea of the 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998) and argues that a 'practice' is not what a single professional does, but what individuals sharing the same goals do in the local community; basically a social process of learning. The OECD (2009) found that peer collaboration through, for example, a community of practice is a key support mechanism for engaging with and using research, perceived by teachers to be the most effective form of professional development.

Ainscow (2007) points out that it is important to identify the most important levers of change within an institution. For example, Senge (1989) in Ainscow (2007b) identifies policy documents, conferences and in-service training as 'low levers'. Such levers are important initiatives, but they rarely impact upon the school's structure. Crossley and Corbyn (2010) put forward the view that abandonment of some existing practices to create capacity and redeployment of resources are key levers for change, while Kotter (1996) includes establishing 'a sense of urgency' as a first step in the change process. In many cases, the impetus for change may be a particular event or crisis – such as poor school results – that brings people together to take action.

Fullan (2011) sees intrinsic motivation, instructional improvement, teamwork and 'allness' as crucial elements for whole-system reform. He also identifies some 'wrong drivers': accountability (versus capacity-building); individual teachers and leadership quality (versus promoting group solutions); technology – investing and assuming this will carry the day – (versus instruction); and fragmented strategies (versus integrated, systemic strategies).

Ainscow (2008) also adds performance evaluation as a lever for change. He notes that schools are inclined to focus on what gets measured and concludes that it is important to 'measure what we value' rather than 'valuing what we can measure' (Ainscow, 2008, p. 72).

A starting point when promoting change will very often be the quality of the learners' experience which can be evaluated based on the following indicators: presence (do students attend school and how?); participation (do students participate in schools and how?) and achievement (the outcomes of their learning) (Ainscow, 2008; Agency, 2011b).

Ainscow and West (2006) in their study of schools in urban areas identified the following factors as key levers of school change: the presence of incentives that encourage stakeholders to initiate collaboration for their interests; the development of a collective responsibility to bring about improvements for all partners; the willingness of head teachers and other leading staff to drive collaboration forward, including the identification of common priorities relevant for a range of stakeholders; the provision of external help in terms of consultants/advisers who are also willing to learn alongside the school-based partners; and, finally, a willingness from the local authority or board to engage with the collaborative process.

Carrington and Robinson (2006) summarised the most important factors of change as: the development of a learning community, incorporating a critical friend; valuing collaboration with parents and the broader community; engaging students as citizens in school review and development; and, finally, supporting teachers' critical engagement with inclusive ideals and practices. Burstein et al. suggest that change relies on a series of actions – from building a commitment to change, planning change, preparing and supporting personnel for change and actually making the changes – which reflect the complexity of the school environment and its unique characteristics (Burstein et al., 2004). Finally, an important element is the development of a common vocabulary to support the change in thinking among teachers, necessary to promote any change at school level (Ainscow and West, 2006).

In summary, the main factors that promote the process of change in schools include:

- the school culture and ethos;
- the leadership styles;
- the 'enquiry attitude' of the staff;
- the capacity to listen to learners' voices; and
- the mobilisation of support, first from within the school and then outside the school.

School changes must be part of a systemic change that concerns, for example, the school district, the region and, in general, the wider context (Ainscow, 2005). Such factors impact on the development of schools as 'learning organisations' (Burnett, 2005), which are able to question their capacity to respond to all learners and to continuously transform their structures.

5.4 Transferring and sustaining effective practice

Recent literature provides ample evidence of the difficulties of spreading 'good' practice, particularly in the education sector where complex variables are involved in the transfer of practice from one context to another (Ozga, 2004). Ozga argues that the following points need to be considered in the transfer of knowledge and skills: firstly, that effective

knowledge transfer needs preparation from both partners in the process; secondly, that effective knowledge transfer is not linear, but requires discussion, problem-solving and joint development; thirdly, that teaching is a practical activity rather than a technical one and is strictly connected to the context in which it takes place. It is difficult, therefore, for research to provide a universal solution to specific problems. Fourthly, research in education may not necessarily produce 'actionable knowledge', as it reflects particular schools and classroom situations. Finally, Ozga says that what works in education should be understood in terms of 'what works for whom and in what circumstances' (2004, p. 3).

The notion of good practice in itself is an ambiguous concept and the Roeher Institute (2004) notes that very few authors define this concept in clear terms. Fielding et al. (2005) also point out that a practice cannot be de-contextualised and transferred, as what is good for one context may not necessarily be good for another. They suggest that most important is the 'meta-practice of improvement – the way teachers think about, evaluate or seek to improve their practice' (p. 56). The Agency (2010b) similarly points out that conceptions of, policies for and practices in inclusive education are constantly undergoing change and that any examination of 'current' practice, in any country, needs to be considered in the context of wider educational reforms in that country. They quote Mitchell (2005), who says 'While countries can learn from others' experiences, it is important that they give due consideration to their own social-economic-cultural-historical singularities' (p. 19).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) stress that the end product of an initiative cannot just be adopted, as it is the slowly-built understanding that makes implementation effective. They also note that novice teachers cannot copy more experienced colleagues because their personalities and skillsets are too different – similarly, as stated above, countries cannot copy each other due to differences in cultures and histories.

Fielding et al. (op. cit.) have shown that teachers are more willing to share practice and learn from colleagues than from centrally-driven programmes and training. It is for this reason that the transfer of good practice should be interpreted in terms of a social process based on the following factors: relationships and trust among practitioners; teacher and institutional identity; and learner/school engagement in trying something out.

Practice transfer should therefore consist of the professional growth of teachers, rather than the application of someone else's ideas and practices to their everyday work. For this reason, practice transfer may best be described in terms of joint practice development. Here, the role of a linkage agent is critical, i.e. someone able to build relationships and create connectivity. Becheikh et al. (2010) argue that knowledge transfer in education should be based on a social interaction model that places the emphasis on both researchers' and practitioners' strengths and weaknesses. Universities, communities of practice or other agencies can produce knowledge, but such knowledge must be made clear, understandable and easily accessible to its end users in schools. The role of the linkage agent is to build a bridge between the realities of the school and research communities. Moreover, they can also synthesise information and promote exchanges between practitioners, promoting the culture of critical thinking that is needed to foster change.

In addition to engaging *with* research, teachers are increasingly taking part *in* research activity. The OECD (2009) found that individual and collaborative research has the highest impact rate in terms of teachers' perceptions of their professional development, yet, despite increased participation, research engagement as a form of continuing professional

development has one of the lowest teacher participation rates. However, research is beginning to provide some evidence around the process and outcomes of teacher engagement both with and in research (e.g. Figgis et al., 2000; Morris et al., 2007).

Finally, the sustainability of change needs to be kept in mind (Booth and Smith, 2002; Muijs et al., 2011). When change does take place, it is crucial that it has both a degree of permanence and a certain measure of adaptability to circumstances so that it can be supported and maintained. In their work on sustainability and replicability, Cordingley and Bell (2007) highlight the need for, among other factors, appropriate ‘buy in’ from key individuals and collaborative working. Collins and Porras describe ‘built to last’ transformation, saying ‘to be built to last you have to be built to change’. (2005, Preface xiii).

Summary

A move towards more inclusive practice requires a change in thinking to bring about the transformation of schools. Change in education is complex and multi-layered and demands a debate on purpose and outcomes involving all stakeholders, including learners and families. While it may be possible to identify key drivers for change, the notion of spreading ‘good’ practice needs careful consideration. Social processes, such as communities of practice, engagement with and in research and collaborative development to build understanding, appear most likely to lead to successful and sustainable change – and to the development of mainstream schools with the capacity to meet the needs of all learners in their community.

6. INCLUDING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM SETTINGS

Research in the area of inclusive education has shown that meeting the requirements of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings is not only possible, but that it benefits learners both with and without disabilities (Hines, 2001; Peetsma et al., 2001; Rea et al., 2002; Kalambouka et al., 2005; MacArthur et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2006; Farrell et al., 2007; Curcic, 2009; de Graaf et al., 2013). Despite this, as noted in the introduction, the World Health Organization (WHO/World Bank report, 2011) reports that many learners with more severe disabilities and/or with behavioural difficulties continue to be educated in special schools or in special units/classrooms. This section discusses the positive outcomes of inclusive communities for all learners and why some groups are considered to be particularly 'hard to include'.

6.1 Inclusive education – benefits for all learners

Hicks-Monroe reports that when learners are educated in mainstream settings, a series of positive benefits can result, including:

> *… (1) Friendships (2) Increased social initiations, relationships and networks (3) Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills (4) Increased achievement of IEP* [individual educational plan] *goals (5) Greater access to general curriculum (6) Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization (7) Increased inclusion in future environments (8) Greater opportunities for interactions (9) Higher expectations (10) Increased school staff collaboration (11) Increased parent participation and (12) Families are more integrated into community* (2011, p. 65).

Similarly, the WHO/World Bank (2011) indicates that the acquisition of communication, social and behavioural skills is superior in inclusive classes or schools and several researchers have also documented positive outcomes (Fisher and Meyer, 2002; Hunt, 2011; Bennett and Gallagher, 2012).

McLeskey and Waldron (2007) and Waldron and McLeskey (2010) show some of the negative consequences of separate teaching for the learners with disabilities, such as:

> *… Disruption of the student's routine and the routine of the general education classroom; reduction of instructional time because of transitions from one setting to another; fragmentation of the student's schedule …; difficulty for the student who must learn the rules of several different classroom settings; stigma for the student, who may be viewed as different by others …* (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010, p. 38).

In Italy, where most learners with disabilities are educated in mainstream classrooms, Vianello and Lanfranchi (2009) argue that high academic and social achievement or, in contrast, a deficit in learning can be associated with the location of a student's education. In their research they show that the achievement and social development of learners with intellectual disabilities are greater when they are educated in inclusive classrooms.

Zambotti (2011) indicates that most mainstream teachers identify placement in mainstream classrooms as a fundamental factor for the participation of learners with disabilities and Racionero and Padrós (2010), conceptualising learning as taking place due to dialogic interactions, recognise the importance of social interactions between learners and others within the classroom.

While other researchers (e.g. Cole, Waldron and Majd, 2004; Fore et al., 2008) did not find any particular difference in the achievements of learners with disabilities integrated into

inclusive or special settings, opponents of 'full inclusion' (i.e. learners with disabilities educated in mainstream classrooms full-time) argue that there is not enough empirical evidence to support this process and that inclusion can be detrimental as the mainstream setting is not ready for inclusion or able to provide the intensive support and intervention required by learners with disabilities (Burstein et al., 2004). Other studies have also reported negative effects on learners without disabilities (see Pijl, Nakken and Mand, 2003; Lindsay, 2007; Rogers and Thiery, 2003). Bourke (2010) suggests that policy and practice are often implemented without practitioners being able to critically examine the assumptions underlying the concepts of inclusion, disability and difference and how these concepts can really be respected and valued.

In relation to the socio-emotional effects of inclusive education, Ruijs et al. (2010) report both positive and negative effects of inclusion on learners with disabilities. On the one hand, they are able to attend the local schools and make friends with students living in their school area (Nakken and Pijl, 2002); on the other hand, they could compare their achievements with those of learners without disabilities and this could impact negatively on their self-esteem (Bakker et al., 2007).

Parents of learners with disabilities may feel that mainstream classrooms and teachers are not yet ready to provide the necessary support for their children; that mainstream and special teachers do not have the collaboration skills required to make inclusion work and that the empirical data in favour of inclusion is still limited. Parents of learners without disabilities may feel that learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms take time away from other learners, hence lowering the quality of their instruction (Smith et al., 2006). However, Black-Hawkins et al. (2007) conclude that 'combining inclusion with high levels of achievement is not only possible but essential if all children are to have the opportunity to participate fully in education' (p. 45).

As stated in the conceptual framework above and in Agency work on the Raising Achievement for all Learners project (Agency, 2012a), in the light of the frameworks provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNCRPD (2006), it is time to move beyond the 'confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion' (Allan, 2008, p. 9) that bring about doubts regarding the efficacy and effectiveness of inclusive education and consider how schools can be supported to meet the diverse needs of all young people in their communities.

6.1.1 Including learners with complex needs

There is evidence to suggest that the population of learners with disabilities is changing. As indicated in the Agency thematic session paper on profound and multiple learning disabilities (Agency, 2011d) and the report by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DENI, 2006), the number of learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities is increasing due to medical advances. While early screening and intervention have reduced the incidence of sensory impairments (DENI, 2006), more children are being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders and with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Meeting the needs of learners with these complex needs and challenging behaviours may raise particular issues for mainstream schools and, more specifically, the need for additional, external support and collaboration with wider services. While this may be seen as a barrier to inclusion, the further development of multi-agency services, working closely with schools and families is likely to benefit all learners (Agency, 2011c).

Regarding learners with more profound and multiple learning disabilities, there is an assumption that special schools remain the best option (DENI, 2006; Hornby and Kidd,

2001; Ware et al., 2009), particularly at post-primary level, as mainstream schools are not yet ready to meet these complex needs. Although some authors believe that these children cannot benefit from being educated in mainstream schools (Cigman, 2007; Warnock, 2005; Burstein et al., 2004), there is evidence that they can benefit from mainstream settings, if appropriate interventions are made available on a long-term basis (Simmons and Bayliss, 2007; Agency, 2011d).

Agency member countries (Agency, 2011c; 2011d) indicate that certain pre-requisites are necessary to ensure that the additional support needs of this group of learners can be met in inclusive settings. These include: joint services supported by legislation and effective funding models, co-operative (not competitive) systems of school governance, staff training at the level of both initial and continuing professional development, parental and family involvement and, finally, a system that takes into account social needs and the need for long-term provision and support (Agency, 2011d).

The curriculum must be adapted to ensure that relevant learning and activities are taking place and assessment should take a holistic approach to learners' progress. Pedagogy should support constructivist approaches to learning rather than approaches such as conditioning and task analysis. In particular, it is important that learners with disabilities develop 'horizontal' relationships with their peers (see Ostlund in Agency, 2011d) that may support the development of equal relationships and some control over their environment and living situations (Agency, 2011d). A recent review by New Zealand's Education Review Office (2010) examined how well schools include learners with high support needs and identified the need for innovative and flexible practices to manage the unique challenges, in particular, effective teamwork and constructive relationships.

The NESSE report (2012) indicates that, although there is no consensus on a definition of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBDs), there has been an increase in the number of such learners identified. From an inclusive perspective, individual support for learners with SEBDs should focus on prevention and positive behaviour support (Cooper, 2011; Cooper and Jacobs, 2011). As Cooper indicates, teachers' responses to these learners are crucial in ensuring their participation and avoiding academic failure and peer-rejection. An understanding of the causes of behavioural difficulties that may lie in the classroom, the wider social environment and/or in parenting strategies is also necessary in order to modify them (NESSE, 2012), again pointing to the need for effective, joined up, multi-agency working.

While it must be recognised that including learners with high support needs does present challenges, the difficulties surrounding the language of inclusion – and the lack of clarity around exactly what is meant by this term (raised in Section 3) – must also be considered. Norwich (2013) discusses the tensions and dilemmas of inclusive education and points out the need for 'intellectual honesty of avoiding denial and facing difficult experiences' while also 'being authentic about values that do and should guide personal and social affairs' (p. 136). A focus on the common needs of all children – for belonging, participation and achievement among other things – may serve as an appropriate starting point to address some of these dilemmas and move policy and practice towards a quality education system for all.

Summary

Learners with high support needs, primarily learners with complex multiple disabilities and those with challenging behaviours are still considered 'hard to include'. As outlined above,

the benefits of inclusive schools – and communities – are increasingly being recognised. The Agency (2011d) concludes: 'policy for inclusive education cannot have groups of "but what about" kids! Policy for inclusive education must be for all learners' (p. 6). However, the need for the support and development of mainstream settings – through collaboration with specialist and resourced provision to form flexible learning communities – must also be acknowledged if such a policy is to be successful. The following section addresses systems of support, not only for individual learners, but also for schools to help them increase their capacity to meet the needs of all learners.

7. STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF MAINSTREAM SETTINGS – SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

As outlined in the previous section, in order to implement a policy of inclusion, mainstream schools must increase their ability to respond to the diversity of learners (Ainscow, Muijs et al., 2006). Schools do not work in a vacuum, but are often dependent on the impact of social and political policies for their daily actions. For this reason, strengthening the capacity of mainstream settings includes both the process of building the capacity of mainstream schools, as well as increasing support from the context in which the school is located. An analysis of both the internal and contextual factors of mainstream schools is needed to understand what conditions are encouraging or impeding the development of inclusive education, not only regarding on-going support for the individual learner in school, but also the organisation of support systems in the local community.

In Agency work on Inclusive Education and Classroom Practice in Secondary Schools (Meijer, 2005), three conditions necessary for the development of inclusion were outlined: the teacher (attitudes, being able to create a sense of belonging and pedagogical skills), the school (whole-school approach, flexible support structures, visionary leadership) and the external conditions (including a clear national policy for inclusion, flexible funding arrangements, visionary leadership at the level of the community and regional co-ordination).

More recently, the Agency publication *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education – Recommendations for Practice* (2011c) highlighted a series of factors considered to be fundamental for the development of inclusive practice: responding to the learners' voices, the active participation of learners, positive teacher attitudes, effective teacher skills, visionary school leadership and coherent inter-disciplinary services.

Drawing on recent literature and previous Agency work highlighted above, this section examines some of the strategies and systems of support used to strengthen the capacity of mainstream settings, for example: at community level, networking and collaboration with different agencies, community partners and other local schools; at school level, development of school leadership teams to support a positive culture and ethos and a view of inclusion as a quality issue for all learners; and finally at classroom and individual learner level, through approaches to teaching and learning and organisation of personnel.

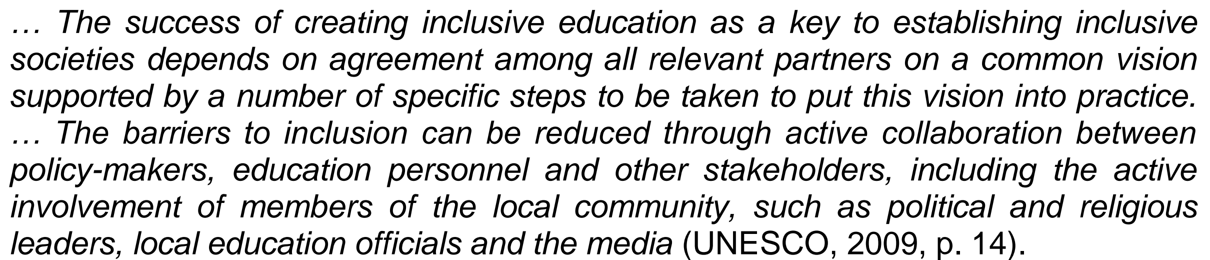
The particular role of special schools in providing support in a policy climate of inclusion is discussed in Section 8.

7.1 Community support

Many studies (Daniels et al., 2000; Lacey, 2000; 2001; Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow, Muijs et al., 2006; Evans, 2007) have underlined the importance of support from the local community as a key factor in the development of inclusive systems.

Inclusion is a process that requires the active participation of the local community (UNESCO, 2005; 2008; 2009) and involves 'implementation both in school and society at large' (UNESCO, 2005, p. 21). Schools do not work in a vacuum and children's learning cannot be separated from the wider social and cultural context or from the local community in which the school is located (Elboj and Niemela, 2010; Racionero and Padrós, 2010).

Similarly, schools cannot be separated from the social context in which they are embedded. This is very clearly stated in the following quote:



… The success of creating inclusive education as a key to establishing inclusive societies depends on agreement among all relevant partners on a common vision supported by a number of specific steps to be taken to put this vision into practice. … The barriers to inclusion can be reduced through active collaboration between policy-makers, education personnel and other stakeholders, including the active involvement of members of the local community, such as political and religious leaders, local education officials and the media (UNESCO, 2009, p. 14).

Although there are many reasons for involving the local community, it is possible to identify two main arguments: first, involving the community in the process of providing support to local schools is a key component in making schools inclusive; second, because inclusion is not an end in itself, rather a means to an end – that of creating inclusive communities and societies (Armstrong and Barton, 2001). The latter can only be achieved if communities hold stakeholders responsible for the education of all learners, decide to commit their resources to achieving goals and fight against all forms of discrimination and exclusion. Many authors point out the need to investigate how the organisation of systems of support for learners with disabilities can impact on the development of inclusive schools (Ainscow, 1999; Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Carrington and Elkins, 2002; Ofsted, 2005; Ainscow and Sandill, 2010).

An example of the role played by the community and the positive impact on the achievement of underprivileged learners can be found in the experiences of the *Zones d'Education Prioritaires* (ZEP) in France, the integrated schools in Northern Ireland and the *Accordi di programma* in Italy. Similarly, projects developed in the USA School Development Program and the Learning Communities in Spain are characterised by the community's participation in education at various levels: from in-class support, to school management and after-school programmes. The crucial role of the community and its impact on school practices is also underlined by the INCLUD-ED project, which identifies successful schools as those where the local community is involved in the decision-making process and school management is through mixed committees (Racionero and Padrós, 2010, p. 157). What is important is that the interactive dialogues used within these communities are egalitarian, based on values of solidarity and equality and that they seek transformation (Racionero and Padrós, 2010). The INCLUD-ED project indicates that there are many ways in which community members can contribute to success in learning (Elboj and Niemela, 2010; Racionero and Padrós, 2010; Tellado and Sava, 2010).

7.1.1 Multi-agency practice

Some of the literature investigated for this report (see in particular Lacey, 2000; 2001 and Ainscow, Muijs et al., 2006) indicates that the number of professionals involved with learners is likely to increase with the severity of the learner's disabilities. It is possible to identify four main types of services that have traditionally supported learners with disabilities: the educational sector (e.g. school, specialist teachers, educational psychologists), the health sector (e.g. doctors, physiotherapists, speech therapists), the social services (e.g. family, social worker, job coaches) and voluntary bodies (e.g. charities, respite care providers, private homes).

The forms of co-operation among different local stakeholders can vary a great deal. Frattura and Capper (2007) indicate that in order to achieve inclusion and dismantle all forms of segregated provision, it is necessary to act at the level of school organisation to enable the education system to provide integrated comprehensive services (ICS) for all learners. Providing ICS is a way of ensuring that schools, and educational structures in

general, work on a preventative basis to avoid learners dropping out from education, rather than focusing on learners' deficits. As many commentators state (Burnett, 2005; Frattura and Capper, 2007), there is a need to increase collaboration among services (e.g. local health units, educational bodies), so that learners with disabilities and their schools can access all services as they are needed.

The INCLUD-ED reports (European Commission, 2007; 2009) also suggests that closer collaboration between education, social work and health departments is needed for the assessment of learners with disabilities. In a study of inter-organisational linkages, Farmakopoulou (2002) indicates that collaborative structures need to be related to wider economic, political and social forces. Farmakopoulou also stresses the importance of taking into account the issue of power relations. The asymmetry of exchange relationships, especially with regard to resource allocation between educational personnel and social workers for example, may create conflicts and disagreements to the detriment of learners with disabilities.

In her research on multi-professional working and its impact on the education of learners with disabilities, Soan (2012) draws an interesting picture of the most commonly used terminology in this area and how it reflects differences in the approaches used to deliver services to support learners with disabilities. First of all, she indicates that there has been a shift from words such as 'multi-agency' and 'multi-disciplinary', where the emphasis was on different adults working together to support learners (but on a separate basis), to words such as 'inter-disciplinary' and 'inter-agency', where the different adults start to work across boundaries and professions. Finally, words such as 'trans-agency' and 'trans-disciplinary' (Soan, 2012) have begun to be used to show how different services are working across disciplines to respond to learners with disabilities in a holistic way. Frost (2005 in Soan, 2012) provides a useful hierarchy of terms to describe a continuum in partnership:

> *Level 1: co-operation – services work together towards consistent goals and complementary services, while maintaining their independence.*
>
> *Level 2: collaboration – services plan together and address issues of overlap, duplication and gaps in service provision towards common outcomes.*
>
> *Level 3: co-ordination – services work together in a planned and systematic manner towards shared and agreed goals.*
>
> *Level 4: merger/integration – different services become one organisation in order to enhance service delivery* (Soan, 2012, pp. 92–93).

Agency work (e.g. Agency, 2005; 2010a; 2011c) reinforces the importance of collaboration between schools and community services, such as health and social services, to ensure a holistic approach to the learner. This support needs to be provided in a way that goes beyond schooling and ensures that pathways to further education and employment are also investigated (Agency, 2006). Any support should also be provided as close to the family as possible (Agency, 2010a).

Lacey (2000; 2001) suggests that the services that provide support to learners with disabilities can be divided into the team and the network. She writes that the former refers to the people who work closely with the learner with disabilities (e.g. the teacher, the parent and the teaching assistant), while the latter is concerned with the work of different experts who work in a consultative role to provide brief and often intermittent services.

Both groups need to be investigated in more detail in order to understand what can be done to promote the inclusion process.

Ebersold (2012) supports an ecological approach to disability, where the focus is on the means (human, economic and material) necessary to create accessible learning contexts and on the inter-dependence among different professionals in the locality to provide a continuum of interventions throughout a learner's life.

However, services are not always available when needed and some tensions emerge that need to be addressed. In particular, the lack of communication (see Roaf, 2002; Agency, 2005, 2010a; Glenny and Roaf, 2008) can be a major problem as it may increase the 'delegation phenomenon', where each service works independently from others. Moreover, in order to provide adequate support, it is sometimes necessary to break down the barriers between different types of services and personnel and to provide opportunities to meet regularly in order to solve problems (Daniels, et al., 2000; Ofsted, 2005).

Lacey (2001) notes that different services have tended to work in a fragmented way, with each one focusing on a specific aspect of the learner's difficulties or needs (for example, the doctor on the health condition, the teacher on the intellectual development and the social services on the social integration after school). In some countries, services are also under the control of different ministries (for example the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health), increasing the potential for poor communication among different service providers. This compartmentalisation inevitably impacts negatively on a learner's educational career (Ebersold, 2012). Soan (2012) suggests that legislation should underpin the development and the commitment of the different services, so that inter-professional working supports learners with disabilities with all those involved identifying, assessing, monitoring and reviewing provision together.

Another problem concerns difficulties in accessing services due to excessive bureaucracy and confusion between the different organisations that have different regulations and administration procedures, such as application processes and information requests. As many services are under-resourced, there are constraints in the use of funds that can undermine the availability of resources when and where they are needed (Lacey, 2001).

The evidence indicates that in order to improve the organisation of support for inclusive education, a series of interventions is required both within and outside the classroom. Dyson et al. (2010) make a case for services to be built upon shared principles rather than prescribed models. They also suggest using local experience and knowledge to ensure that policies designed at a national level are 'made' and implemented locally. Schools are therefore required to work out their own model of service delivery and partnership. What remains crucial is that different services are organised into a team or a single service, in order to avoid tensions and conflicts that may emerge from the different cultures and organisations of the service providers, for example in relation to how resources should be given and used. This would also provide families and schools with a single point of contact. Work by the Agency (Agency, 2010a) similarly stresses the critical importance of co-ordination, key working and joint planning between organisations and disciplines, together with joint policy-making between departments of education, health and social services.

There is clearly not a single model of service delivery that can fit with all schools and contexts. However, Dyson et al. (op. cit.) have identified key factors for the effective delivery of services that may impact positively upon the participation of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools – for example, full-service extended schools, multi-

agency teams and alternative curriculum programmes. Finally, an effective approach requires early intervention programmes that focus on prevention and not only on remediation.

7.1.2 Partnerships in the community

A vital factor in the provision of services is the creation of partnerships. As indicated by the UNICEF report (2012):

> *… Inclusive education needs to be driven by strategic partnerships between diverse actors, including families and communities, local, national and regional NGOs, international organisations and governments, and in particular organizations of people with disabilities, families and children with disabilities themselves* (UNICEF, 2012, p. 49).

In order for partnerships to be effective, the literature investigated for this review has indicated that the writing of contracts or service agreements to provide clear indications of the different roles, times to meet and the expertise to share are needed (Lacey, 2000; 2001; Frattura and Capper, 2007). Such contracts are important tools to create networks that meet on a regular basis and are able to achieve joint problem-solving. Moreover, agreements and contracts ensure a continuum of services that strengthen the capacity of the mainstream sector.

Burnett (2005), discussing special school partnerships, differentiates between partnerships with loose ties, which describe links established occasionally to address a specific problem, and partnerships with strong ties involving co-location of staff. Many leaders of special schools establish links with health authorities and social services in order to provide a holistic approach to the learners as well as with other schools, in particular with mainstream schools (see Section 8). Burnett points out that special schools also establish multi-agency partnerships with local communities and with local industries to support learners with disabilities in the difficult process of finding training and/or employment.

In recent years, the public sector in a number of countries has been characterised by the devolution of powers from central to local government with governments becoming 'commissioners' of services (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman and West, 2011). This trend of devolution in public policy has lead to the increased participation of the private sector in the delivery of services (including the voluntary sector, NGOs and charities). When provision for learners with disabilities is being discussed, therefore, it is important to discuss the role of voluntary bodies as providers of support and services. In particular, it is necessary to investigate whether the engagement of private bodies may strengthen the work of local providers and mainstream schools or whether it contributes to the delegation of responsibilities from the public to the private sector.

Drake (2002) says that the voluntary sector takes many forms and has many functions: from service provision, self-help, pressure group campaigning, resource raising, co-ordination and training, leisure time, advocacy and research, to acting as intermediary bodies. The voluntary sector may sometimes be viewed negatively due to its patronage in the form of charity that can be seen as patronising, controlling and disempowering for individuals. Consequently, disability movements have traditionally declared their preference for self-representation and have rejected the interposition of the traditional disability charities between themselves and government (Drake, 2002).

In the UK, however, Oliver and Barnes (2006) note that both the numbers and influence of such organisations controlled by disabled people have declined, with a resurrection of big charities, often supported as the 'supposed legitimate voice' of disabled people. They also point to an increase in government organisations, which are not accountable to people with disabilities.

Clearly, in developing inclusive communities, voluntary organisations should ensure that people with disabilities play a leading role in the decision-making process and efforts should be made to develop structures that improve physical access to premises and increase the number of people with disabilities who are employed in voluntary organisations and occupy authority positions (Drake, op. cit.).

Morris states that while it used to be possible to distinguish between organisations 'of' and organisations 'for' disabled people (with the latter term referring to charities, often impairment-specific, that provide services to, and campaign on behalf of, disabled people), most of these now:

> *… have disabled people on their management committees and in many cases have aligned themselves with the campaigns initially pioneered by the more grassroots organisations of disabled people* (2011, p. 3).

The voluntary sector's role in developing more inclusive policy and practice remains complex and it is important to be aware of the possible limitations of the voluntary sector outlined above. Nevertheless, its specialist provision, having been transformed from children's homes or residential schools into community-based projects, now often supports children and their families, in particular those with the most severe disabilities in their local communities.

7.1.3 Networking

A network has traditionally been described 'as a set of actors (individuals or organisations such as schools) connected by a set of ties, which can be of a more or less formal nature' (Borgatti and Foster, 2003 in Muijs et al., 2011, p. 7). The term 'network', therefore, usually describes hierarchy-free structures, which rely on ties of communication, trust, common interests and recognition (Bienzle et al., 2007). Drawing on the principle of exchange of expertise and know-how, networks may be able to fill the gaps left by institutional deficits.

Networks differ a great deal depending on their size, aims, geographical scope, type of contracts and members, as well as the relationships between individuals and/or organisations (Gilchrist, 2004). For example, it is possible to differentiate between forms of collaboration in the public sectors and forms of collaboration between public and private sectors, including both businesses and charities.

Van Aalst (2003) identifies three main types of networking systems: the community of practice, the networked organisation and the virtual community. The first type of network can be described as a system made up by practitioners to share the knowledge necessary to address common problems. The second type is characterised by co-operation among independent organisations that work autonomously, but are able to share core competences among themselves. Finally, the third type is characterised by the use of ICT for exchanging information and sharing knowledge. Despite the many differences, however, all these networks have one important aspect in common and this is that they are all strongly connected with the local community.

The systematic review on networking in education conducted by the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) identified a series of benefits deriving from networking which, among others, included the development of inclusive cultures (CUREE, 2005). Positive outcomes also included the increased attainment of learners (CUREE 2005; Chapman and Allen, 2005); the facilitation of innovation, change and reform (Chapman and Fullan, 2007; Ainscow and West, 2006; OECD, 2002); changes in teachers' knowledge, skills and classroom behaviours (CUREE, 2005) and the production and transfer of specialised knowledge (OECD, 2000; 2002).

Chapman and Harris (2004) have reported on the positive impact of networking in education, based on a series of key levers. These levers include teaching and learning, distributed leadership, shared commitment to professional development at all levels and the capacity to exploit external support. Another aspect that has proved to be crucial for the development of networking in education is the development of partnerships through the identification of a 'case manager' able to bring new skills into the developing partnership and to promote 'brokerage' skills and the capacity to initiate and access support (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman and West, 2011, p. 12).

What emerges from the literature is that collaborative networks are more effective than externally-driven and imposed programmes of improvement and reform. As Muijs and colleagues (op. cit.) state, a collaborative network allows the school to co-construct its solution and strengthen its capacity to respond to problems, rather than simply relying on programmes that are not specifically designed for the school in that specific setting. They also indicate that collaboration and networking in education are two crucial standpoints to improve the effectiveness of education systems and promote change.

Networking in itself is a neutral tool – it can be used for a variety of purposes – but networking for community development is influenced by values such as equality, empowerment and participation that are very much aligned with those supporting inclusive practice. Educational systems in different countries are increasingly developing networks in education (OECD, 2000; Chapman and Fullan, 2007; Ainscow and West, 2006) and community projects have proved to be successful both in promoting the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups and contributing to the transformation of the community itself.

Temperley and Goddard (2005) conclude that what people do when they come together in a network matters – that rigour and challenge are needed to develop thinking and practice. The networking process also requires people to be honest and willing to examine their own beliefs and ways of doing things. In this way, collaborative enquiry secures the greatest change in thinking and practice.

The great variety of networks makes it difficult to draw general conclusions about their efficacy (Muijs et al., 2011). However, regardless of their size, networks are fundamental systems of support that break the isolation of teachers both within and outside the classroom and act as crucial levers for change (see Tabarelli and Pisanu, 2012; Ainscow, 2005; 2007). Networks are generally perceived to increase the efficiency and efficacy of learning provision and, in the long term, to contribute to quality assurance (Bienzle et al., 2007).

7.1.4 School-to-school collaboration

The development of school-to-school collaboration has proved to be an efficient way to strengthen the capacity of schools to face new challenges and, therefore, to develop inclusive practice. Research conducted by Ainscow, Muijs et al. (2006) highlights the

benefits of schools working together, such as the capacity to solve immediate problems, raise expectations about learning, address the needs of groups of vulnerable learners and widen opportunities for learning. However, contextual factors, such as the commitment and ethos within individual schools, organisational arrangements and forms of management and leadership, must be taken into account.

Ainscow and West (2006) differentiate between four levels of collaboration: association, co-operation, collaboration and, finally, collegiality, all of which delineate the depth of partnerships among schools and between schools and other local actors. Association implies a superficial level of links, without any sharing of knowledge and/or resources. Co-operation implies closer links, with a minimum amount of knowledge- and resource-sharing through participation in meetings and activities. Collaboration is mostly 'on the spot', involving schools working together to address a particular challenge or problem. This form of collaboration requires the sharing of knowledge and resources, but not on a long-term basis, with the consequence that changes are not sustainable. In this type of link, partners play different roles with weaker and stronger partners. Finally, collegiality is a long-term link with a 'recognition of interdependence' (Ainscow and West, 2006, p. 135). This allows partners to pool mutual knowledge and resources and to create new knowledge for the benefit of all.

Sliwka (2003) indicates that, before the 1980s, schools were mostly operating in isolation, implementing national or regional guidelines in a top-down model. More recently, with the passing of legislative measures that favour the autonomy of school systems and the devolution of power from the state to local administrative bodies, educational institutions have begun to collaborate with different bodies at the local level and become accountable for their work (Glatter et al., 2003). Through such action, greater collaboration has increased the number of opportunities for networked schools to respond to the different needs of learners, including those with disabilities.

Leadbeater (2005) suggests that school-to-school collaboration has benefits in terms of personalised learning, including, for example, making better use of common resources, specialist teachers and accelerating the spread of innovation. Close collaboration can also improve learners' experience of transition between schools/phases of education. Leadbeater explains that collaboration is 'not an attractive add-on but a different way to do the school's core job' (p. 19) requiring commitment and a culture of trust. He also notes that collaboration can be 'held back by regulation, inspection and funding regimes that encourage schools to think of themselves as autonomous, stand-alone units' (p. 22). Consequently, he says, new models of accountability should include collaboration.

Ainscow and West (2006) and Muijs et al. (2011) also suggest that local authorities/municipalities should support head teachers in their collaborative practice and provide them with professional development to support them to experiment further. Local educational authorities and boards are not required to lead change, but rather to support the work done by head teachers and other school leaders by, for example, monitoring and evaluating the school's progress, as well as identifying how resources and expertise can be used.

In the UK, federations of schools have been greeted as a way of sharing staff, leadership and management and of confronting school failure (Muijs et al., 2011). It is also argued that a federation of schools can promote inclusion and improve curriculum access opportunities for learners with disabilities. A federation of schools can be defined as a joint governing body or a group of schools with a formal (i.e. written) agreement to work

together to raise standards, promote inclusion, find new ways of approaching teaching and learning and build capacity between schools in a coherent manner (p. 65). Federations of schools can be characterised by a formal agreement and a specifically constituted governing body or by a collaborative team which shares goals, but where each school maintains its governing/decision-making body.

School federations can include, among others: cross-phase federations that consist of two or more schools of different phases, e.g. primary and secondary; performance federations which usually consist of two schools where the high performing school helps a weaker school to raise the standards; and mainstreaming federations which consists of one or more special schools which co-operate with a mainstream school. Leadership continues to play a crucial role for the success of the federation and leaders are able to see benefits for their own school and for the whole federation system with increased achievement for all learners (Muijs et al., 2011).

7.2. School level support

Slee and Allan (2001) argue that the organisation of schooling and school practices are crucial aspects for the development of inclusive education. As early as 1999, Clark, Dyson, Millward and Robson recognised the need to focus on organisational features of schooling to promote inclusive practice, rather than on compensatory measures for the individual learners and since this time, and as has been evidenced in this review, many other authors have studied the school factors that impact on inclusive practice. As Deppeler et al. (2005) argue, schools should be supported 'to avoid the creation of barriers and difficulties in the first instance' (p. 120). They stress the need to empower schools through the education of school staff and the development of collaborative contexts.

This section will review the literature on within-school factors supporting inclusive practice, including school culture and ethos, school leadership, and quality and accountability.

7.2.1 School culture and ethos

Although teachers are key practitioners for the education of learners with disabilities, they cannot be considered the only party responsible for the participation of such learners. The recent Agency report on *Teacher Education for Inclusion across Europe* (Agency, 2011a) reported that teachers need certain conditions to implement inclusive practice and emphasised the need to develop teachers, not only in terms of effective skills and competences, but also in terms of values and principles.

What becomes crucial in the organisation of school support is that a certain culture and ethos, supported by school principals, is shared by all school personnel (Winter and O'Raw, 2010). In an Agency report on inclusive assessment, Watkins (2007) concludes that an organisational culture is needed that promotes inclusion and leads teachers and school leaders to re-think and re-structure their teaching and assessment practice to improve the education of all learners. The Agency's work on Key Principles (Agency, 2009d) also notes the need for an organisational culture guided by leaders with a vision that includes clear thinking regarding school development, accountability and responsibility for meeting a diverse range of needs.

School leaders' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion are therefore critical. The Agency's *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (2012b) stresses that the school culture should be aligned with the following core values: valuing learner diversity; supporting all learners; working

with others; and continuing personal professional development. The role of school leaders is further discussed below.

Regarding school ethos, Hart et al. (2006) introduce the ethic of 'everybody', explaining that there is no room in an inclusive classroom for learning opportunities that only benefit 'some people'. Everyone shares responsibility for a productive working atmosphere and contributions from everybody in the learning community will be valued.

In addition to supporting positive relationships both within the school and with external partners, a positive school ethos will ensure that parents are welcome in school and able to contribute, along with others, to their children's learning. At the same time, links with the local community should be fostered to ensure that the organisation of support does not end with schooling. Carter, Clark, Cushing and Kennedy (2007) found that the more extensive the collaboration between schools and families, the more success was experienced by students with exceptionalities.

The INCLUD-ED project (European Commission, 2009) indicates that schools and teachers need to create ways to involve families and community members. It puts forward five types of family participation: informative (i.e. families are informed about what learners do at school); consultative (i.e. families take part in the school's statutory bodies); decisive (i.e. families are required to make decisions); evaluative (i.e. families participate in their children's evaluation process); and finally educative (i.e. families participate in children's learning and their own learning). The latter three models of participation – decisive, evaluative and educative – have proved to be the most effective for promoting inclusion and success in learning (European Commission, 2009).

7.2.2 The role of school leaders

The literature on inclusive education has underlined the crucial role of leadership in fostering innovation and promoting inclusive change (Burstein et al. 2004; Ainscow, 2005; Fielding et al., 2005; Ainscow and West, 2006; Shepherd and Hasazi, 2007; Ainscow, 2007). The Agency paper *Implementing Inclusive Assessment* (Agency, 2009a) reports that schools cannot change and improve without a good leader whose role is fundamental in promoting ways of working and thinking that are in line with the principles of inclusion. Further work by the European Agency (2011c) on Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education supports this, stating the need for visionary school leaders who value diversity among staff as well as learners, encourage collegiality and support innovation.

Fielding et al. (2005) refer to the process of creating cultures within the school to support innovation and sharing of practice, as creating a 'learning school'. They stress the importance of mutual professional learning and the need to instil confidence in teachers as being fundamental to the transfer of new knowledge and skills. They note that head teachers should be enabled to maintain cultures in the long term in order to guarantee that structural changes are made and that risks derived from repeated turnover of staff and resistance towards change are challenged.

Changes in thinking and in school culture stem from the school leader's capacity to motivate and lead staff and to maintain an enquiring stance to support such change. The attitude of the school leadership can also determine whether collaborative arrangements develop and/or are effective for the school (Ainscow, 2005; 2007). Harris similarly suggests that leadership can be understood in terms of 'shared activities and multiple levels of responsibilities' (2008, p. 156) with the ability to form networks, partnerships and alliances.

Traditional theories about school leaders have portrayed leadership in terms of a single individual who supervises and evaluates teachers and school staff (Shepherd and Hasazi, 2007). Contemporary views about leadership have modified these ideas and identified a series of limitations embedded in the old, managerial approach. The new approach goes beyond traditional top-down hierarchical styles and extends the leadership role to other teacher leaders (Liasidou and Svensoon, 2012) and in general to any other staff member who occupies a leading role within the institution. Such actors are important as 'enforcers' (Sindelar in Liasidou and Svensoon, 2012, p. 34) or 'drivers' of the process of change as they multiply the action of the head teacher. This is what commentators describe as distributed leadership and/or a leadership partnership (Burnett, 2005; Harris, 2008).

Harris (2008) describes distributed leadership as the form of leadership required for future organisations and institutions, in which there will be a need for leaders rather than bosses. Leadership, or more specifically distributed leadership, should be used as a tool to improve learning, both of school staff and learners, rather than to meet the targets of an accountability or a standards agenda. Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) reinforce the central role played by the school principal in moving towards greater inclusion, especially during a period dominated by a high-stakes accountability culture. They suggest that the role of the principal is to lubricate the human machinery in order to provide support to all school staff and to develop solid relationships with teachers, relieving them from the pressures of accountability to enable them to work in the best possible conditions.

The role of the school principal is complex and suggests the need for rigorous preparation to ensure that they have an extensive knowledge of school change and of the development of learning communities (Hoppey and McLeskey, 2013). Harris (op. cit.) suggests that future leaders should be able to respond to the requirements of the context of which they are an integral part and focus on issues such as inter-dependence, participation and relationships, rather than on highly specialised competencies and abilities.

Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) found that leaders in inclusive schools modelled collaborative practice in everyday interactions with staff and arranged formal and informal opportunities for staff collaboration. They supported and enabled collaborative school development, but were autocratic when key decisions needed to be made. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) add that leaders also need personal characteristics such as commitment, resilience, passion and understanding, as these affect their ability to apply the necessary practices successfully.

Work by Pont and colleagues (2008) notes that effective school leadership is essential to improve both the efficiency and equity of schooling. Their work across 22 countries identified four main policy levers to improve school practice: (re) define school leadership responsibilities; distribute school leadership; develop skills for effective school leadership; and make school leadership an attractive profession.

Robinson et al. (2009) synthesised research that explored links between leadership and student outcomes. They identified eight dimensions of leadership practices, including: promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum; establishing goals and expectations; strategic resourcing; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. They also highlighted the importance of establishing effective connections with home and community.

Thomas suggests that effective leadership teams are 'self-evaluative, reviewing past achievements, and constantly looking to improve both themselves and their schools'

(2009, p. 2) and, more recently, Levin (2013) notes that, as well as leading teaching and learning, school leaders must also lead for public confidence and support – managing the political environment in and out of school in a way that sustains the organisation and builds community support for it.

A new leadership profile, informed by a social justice framework, is considered by many authors to be central to the development of the mainstream school's capacity to support the needs of learners with disabilities and their families. To achieve such goals, Shepherd and Hasazi (2007) identify a series of factors that can support school leaders in the process of developing inclusion: developing school cultures that include all learners; promoting effective instructional practices; creating professional learning communities, in particular bringing together special and mainstream school teachers; and increasing the participation of parents and local community in school activities. Finally, leaders that embrace a social justice framework understand the moral dimension of their role and do their best to ensure that all learners, including those with disabilities, can learn in mainstream classrooms.

7.2.3 School quality and accountability

School leaders will be aware of the need for monitoring and evaluation at all levels to ensure quality provision, but should also be aware of the impact that some systems of accountability can have on the development of inclusive practice.

While inclusive education is widely agreed to be about ensuring both quality education and excellence for all learners, it is not unusual for achievement to be measured against a set of standards or for raising achievement to be 'equated with the improvement in test performance' (Booth and Smith, 2002, p. 6). The drive to 'raise standards' may therefore be in opposition to an inclusive view of 'raising achievement' and some initiatives may provide an incentive to 'teach to the test' (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Lloyd, 2007).

Such an accountability framework may have a negative impact on the education of learners with disabilities, as it excludes those who cannot achieve according to a narrow 'standards' agenda, marginalising and excluding many learners (Sodha and Margo, 2010). According to Bourke (2010), the focus on raising standards has had a negative impact on the implementation of inclusive education and has also risked counteracting attempts to promote equity. Alexander points out that high-stakes testing, punitive inspection and the marketisation of schooling 'generate considerable collateral damage while not necessarily delivering on standards' (2012, p. 9). (See also Nichols and Berliner, 2007; Alexander, 2010; Alexander et al., 2010; Ravitch, 2010).

Inclusive education, therefore, may be challenged by conflicting policy agendas that, on the one hand, support the development of schools that welcome learner diversity and, on the other hand, align with the pressure to focus on high academic standards. This aspect of the accountability agenda shows schools caught in a loop of having to support inclusion while being forced to fit into standardised achievement tests that do not take into account the diversity of the student population. The work of Berhanu (2011) brings to the fore the risks of a neo-liberal philosophy coupled with market solutions, competition and standardisation policies that can impact negatively on the principles of valuing diversity and equity and on the development of inclusive education in general, despite overt political intentions to do otherwise.

Gilbert (2012) suggests that a shift in mind-set and culture is required so that accountability is professionally owned rather than externally imposed, with a greater

emphasis on formative accountability as a complement to summative accountability and increased collaboration within and across schools.

Hargreaves and Braun (2012) found that in Ontario, due to 'threshold' performance indicators, teachers experienced pressure to concentrate their efforts on students who would achieve the easiest threshold gains rather than on all students and, in particular, those who had the greatest needs. They note that this phenomenon is common to all systems that assign numerical thresholds to performance targets. This policy may lead to the development of compensatory approaches rather than a focus on diversity and value seen in wider achievement and personal progress. In a study of accountability in high-performing education systems, Husbands et al. (2008) found that only two out of thirteen countries reported a broad range of outcomes in a holistic way and recent work by Hargreaves and Fullan notes the need for schools to be 'evidence-informed, not data-driven' (2012, p. 164).

More specifically, attempts to raise the achievement of learners with disabilities may be at risk of failure where disability is used to justify the lack of progress. In addition, 'perverse incentives' may develop – if learners' outcomes are poor, then the school or local authority/municipality is allowed to request more support. This practice also fails to address the question of whether the learning and teaching approaches used for learners with disabilities have been effective (Sodha and Margo, 2010).

Sometimes, additional incentives, such as extra personnel, have had little impact on improving the outcomes of learners with disabilities (Giangreco and Doyle, 2007). This results from a focus on the quantity of provision rather than on the effectiveness and the quality of the incentives provided. Put briefly, this accountability system may encourage schools to push children 'up the funding ladder rather than reflect on their own practice and, where necessary, change it' (Sodha and Margo, 2010, p. 109).

Such systems may leave schools with the illusion of being in charge of the education of learners, when in reality they have to comply with centralised requests (Ball and Junemann, 2012). Piij and Frissen suggest that, from an inclusive perspective, policy-makers could better support the development of inclusive schools by:

> *… stating what is expected from schools without prescribing how it should be done, by removing all hindrances in regulations and funding, by stimulating forms of additional training for teachers and by avoiding as much as possible funding systems requiring formal labelling procedures* (2009, p. 373).

Sodha and Margo (op. cit.) also identified that the more responsibility schools have for the education of all their learners, the better they will be able to comply with an inclusive agenda. What is important, however, is that on-going monitoring actions, both internal and external to schools, are guaranteed in order to ensure that schools gains are maintained.

Fullan (2011) talks about the need for vertical accountability, with transparency at classroom, school and district levels essential for sustainable progress. He stresses the need for capacity-building, engagement and trust-building to also produce lateral accountability among peers that is critical for whole-system reform.

Another crucial problem relating to accountability has been the climate of competition that has developed in some countries. The publication of examination results and funding allocated through competitive bidding make it hard to develop a culture of collaboration (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman and West, 2011). Hargreaves notes that:

> *It is widely held among politicians that competition drives up standards in the system: the challenge is now to recognise that a renewed culture of extended moral purpose is directed to the same end* (2012, p. 16).

From an inclusive perspective, therefore, it is important that research also focuses on the importance of evaluating the engagement, progress and outcomes of learners with disabilities in order to understand if the support provided for them fully meets their needs. Douglas et al. (2012) note that international bodies tend to collect data that provides information about performance against given standards (for example in literacy and numeracy) or about pupil attendance. They suggest that educational outcomes in relation to learners with disabilities could be grouped into: attainment-related outcomes, attendance-related outcomes, happiness-related outcomes and independence-related outcomes. As also indicated in Agency work (Watkins, 2007), different countries assess and collate young people's educational engagement, progress and outcomes in different ways. Within an inclusive approach, however, assessment should be carried out for all children and young people for academic and non-academic areas. The data generated from such assessments should be appropriately disaggregated as required and as is useful (e.g. to show outcomes for different groups of learners).

7.3. Classroom organisation and individual learner support

Classroom support is a key area for the development of inclusive practice (Rose and Coles, 2002; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Vianello and Lanfranchi, 2009; Ware et al., 2011). Researchers (McLeskey and Waldron, 2007; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Ware et al., 2011) suggest that withdrawal from mainstream classrooms and lessons should be reduced to a minimum. However, research also shows that if inclusive environments are poorly designed and organised, the chances of any improvement for learners with disabilities are drastically reduced (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010). This section of the report will deal with the organisation of in-class support – including teaching and learning approaches and curriculum and assessment – that promotes learner participation in the mainstream classroom. Individual support can be seen as a way of modifying the organisation of teaching and learning and curriculum and assessment in order to respond to the specific requirements of individual learners – from personalisation of teaching and learning to different forms of in-class support, such as the provision of additional aids and the support provided by assistants and peers.

From an inclusive perspective, it is crucial to listen to the learners themselves when providing individual support, rather than planning according to a normative system of categorisation. Gibson (2006) notes that the voices of learners with disabilities are often silenced, with parents (and adults in general) often being asked to speak on their behalf, although such practice may not accurately convey the learners' experiences.

Mortier et al. (2011) investigated the perspectives of learners with disabilities who receive additional support. Although the findings from such small-scale research cannot be generalised, the authors provide a series of recommendations that need to be taken into account when arranging individual support. The study indicates that learners appreciate support that allows them to take part in classroom activities and the school community, but they do not like support that makes them feel 'different' from their peers. Finally, learners with disabilities report that they appreciate support when it reduces impairment effects. Overall, computers are not considered to be as stigmatising as other supports such as adapted chairs, adapted tables and walkers. Generally, learners prefer to work as much as possible without the use of an adult helper or support (Broer, Doyle and Giangreco, 2005).

In providing individual support, Higgins et al. (2006) consider how this can be done in non-stigmatising ways that respect children's desire to be part of the group, while still ensuring that they are learning. This 'dilemma of difference' is explored further by Norwich in Terzi (2010).

7.3.1 Individual Educational Plans

All of the interventions required at the level of the individual learner are usually reflected in the individual educational plan (IEP). The IEP is the tool that exemplifies how the different systems of support are organised around an individual learner with disabilities and the way in which local agencies can be co-ordinated and progress can be monitored.

Very often, the IEP includes information about the medical conditions and needs of the learner with disabilities, with some suggestions about teaching and learning approaches as well as community support. Ideally, such a tool will also include all information that safeguards the social inclusion of learners with disabilities in the different phases and aspects of life (see for example, Agency, 2002; 2005; 2009b; 2009c; 2010). It should therefore involve a range of staff from the school (e.g. teachers), resource centres (e.g. specialised personnel, peripatetic teachers) and, where necessary, local health units (e.g. medical personnel), as well as personnel from voluntary organisations. Most importantly, it should involve the learners with disabilities and/or their representatives and advocates. In the context of inclusion, however, care should be taken to ensure that IEPs do not imply that learners require 'a different educational diet' (Norwich and Lewis, 2001).

Winter and O'Raw (2010) note, as part of the IEP process, the need to regularly review and monitor the learner's progress and plan adequately for transitions. McCausland (2005) reviewed IEPs across five countries to make a number of recommendations about identification and assessment, planning, implementation and review.

Frankl (2005) notes that IEPs can lead to increased bureaucracy and workload and may be 'bolted on' to the provision on offer, with a focus on behavioural principles where learning is seen as linear and incremental. She suggests that group plans may encourage teachers to take more responsibility for learners and better integrate planning.

7.3.2 The role of Learning Support Assistants

Along with the IEP, the most commonly used form of support for learners with disabilities within the mainstream classroom is the learning support assistant (Blatchford et al., 2004; Ofsted, 2006; Ware et al., 2011; Giangreco et al., 2012). Rose and O'Neill (2009) indicate that the number of learning support assistants (also called teaching assistants, special needs assistants or paraprofessionals) has increased in recent years.

The literature on learning support assistants suggests that the role is contentious (Giangreco et al., 2005; Bourke, 2010; Rose and O'Neill, 2009; Ware et al., 2011) and requires further scrutiny (Giangreco, Doyle and Suter, 2011; Giangreco, 2010; Giangreco and Broer, 2007). Bourke (2010) reports that mainstream teachers are often confused about what to do when there are other adults in their classrooms and they often tend to delegate the 'problem'. Similarly, Rose and O'Neill (2009), drawing on Blatchford et al. (2007), indicate that teachers are often uncertain about the benefits that teaching assistants provide for their pupils' learning.

Similarly, other researchers (Ainscow, 2000; Giangreco and Doyle, 2007) indicate that learners with disabilities that are supported by learning support assistants tend to learn less well than those learners without assistants. More recently, Blatchford et al. (2012)

found that, in general, the more support pupils received from teaching assistants, the less progress they made. They found that many assistants were more concerned with the completion of tasks than with learning and understanding.

Mortier et al. (2011) also report that, in some cases, learners consider adult support to be a barrier. Such support may also be perceived as a form of control that does not allow them to experiment, but rather increases their feelings of inadequacy and dependency. Other researchers similarly found that a close relationship with the learning support assistant may be a barrier to the participation of learners with disabilities (Ware et al., 2011; Giangreco, 2010), as it reduces the learner's opportunities for developing independence and interaction with peers without disabilities. Rose and O'Neill (2009) suggest that when the role of learning support assistants is focused on working with individual learners with disabilities, they may inhibit the inclusion process by isolating the learner from his/her peers.

Blatchford et al. (op. cit.) found further problems when teaching assistants took on teaching tasks, leading to a 'separation' of individuals from the teacher and a possible reduction in teacher-led learning. In later work, Webster and Blatchford (2013) found that pupils with a Statement of SEN in the UK often had a lower quality pedagogical experience, with teaching being provided by teaching assistants. Giangreco et al. (2011) also note that the increasing trend of over-relying on paraprofessional supports for learners with disabilities should be further investigated.

In earlier work, Giangreco and Suter (2009) found evidence that the delivery of paraprofessional support is often not well implemented. They suggest that many paraprofessionals are not adequately trained, although they are often required to assume teacher-type responsibilities and duties at the level of instruction and curriculum. They add that it is not advisable for learners who have complex needs to be supported by the least qualified practitioners, who may also not be adequately paid for these duties.

Giangreco (2010) states that, although the support of teaching assistants is still needed, this type of support should be considered as being among the most restrictive support options, especially when used for teaching and learning. In contrast, Giangreco et al. (op. cit.) indicate that the ratio between learning assistants and learners with disabilities could be investigated as an alternative way of evaluating the level of inclusiveness of mainstream schools.

New Brunswick Association for Community Living (2007) suggests that paraprofessionals must work to support teachers in classrooms rather than specific students with disabilities. This in turn requires assistants to develop skills to promote student independence and provide support in inclusive ways.

Rose and Coles (2002) state, however, that classroom support may become essential in enabling learners with disabilities that come from special settings to work in mainstream schools along with their peers without disabilities. On the positive side, Rose and O'Neill (2009), drawing on Blatchford et al. (2007), add that learning support assistants are often helpful to maximise the time that learners with disabilities spend in the mainstream classroom and that, despite the drawbacks, their presence can help in the learning process. Blatchford et al. (2012) found that, in some cases, support staff reduced teacher workload and stress levels, increased attention to individual children and improved class control. In secondary schools, the study results showed that assistants could have positive effects on relationships, following instructions and independence in learning.

Some of the challenges in the use of learning support assistants can be linked to their role changing (termed 'role creep' by Blatchford et al., 2012) from caring and assistance to a role more aligned with teaching activities. Schools and teachers may rely too heavily on learning support assistants and the roles of support staff should be critically analysed in order to better understand the influence they may have on the inclusion process (Giangreco and Doyle, 2007). It is clear that, over time, the role of adults working in the classroom with learners with disabilities has evolved and that new training is now necessary. However, it will not be possible to establish one single model of effective provision that can be used internationally, as flexibility will be required for different contexts, schools and learners (Rose and O'Neill, 2009).

7.3.3 Teaching and learning approaches

In providing support within the classroom, the role of teachers becomes fundamental (Meijer, 2003; 2005; Winter and O'Raw, 2010). A study conducted by Ware et al. (2011) for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland has shown that teachers require adequate training – both in initial teacher education and continuous professional development – to meet the requirements of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools (Ware et al., 2011; Agency, 2011b). Ware et al. (op. cit.) recommend that continuous professional development should be available in the form of online training opportunities, so that teachers can take the courses when they are relevant for their own teaching. Teachers are then able to create accommodating classrooms that suit all learners and plan their support in advance to be unobtrusive and natural within the normal flow of the lesson (McLeskey and Waldron, 2000; 2007; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010). Supportive arrangements should:

> *… fit into the on-going details of the daily classroom instruction, be perceived by teachers as effective for students with disabilities as well as other students in the classroom, and enhance and build on the teacher's current repertoire of instructional practices* (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010, p. 37).

Elboj and Niemela (2010) argue for the development of interactive groups of learners as a way of promoting the learning process and turning student diversity into an opportunity for academic success. Many others (e.g. Racionero and Padrós, 2010) agree that learning is a social process based on the dialogic and egalitarian interactions between learners and their peers, as well as between learners and adults. Elboj and Niemela therefore suggest that classrooms should be organised into small groups of heterogeneous learners with the participation of adult volunteers from the local community to increase learning opportunities.

Meijer (2005) underlines that the development of co-operative learning, with a particular focus on peer tutoring, co-operative teaching, collaborative problem-solving, heterogeneous grouping and alternative ways of learning, such as programmes that teach students how to learn and to solve problems, are key elements in the provision of individual support for learning.

More recent Agency work on Raising Achievement for all Learners (Agency, 2012a) cites the work of Higgins et al. (2011), who found that effective feedback, meta-cognition and self-regulation strategies, peer-assisted learning and early intervention were among the most effective learning strategies.

Nind et al. (2004) also highlight the effectiveness of peer-interactive approaches for the inclusion of learners with SEN, along with co-operative learning – an important factor being that learners are active in the construction of personal knowledge.

In a meta-analysis of research on co-teaching, Scruggs et al. (2007) refer to the work of Hargreaves (2003) and suggest that teacher collaboration can lead to increased confidence, more experimentation and risk-taking and, ultimately, continuous improvement. Austin (2001) found that teachers perceived collaborative teaching to be effective in facilitating the academic development of students, both with and without disabilities, possibly due to the reduced student-teacher ratio, review provided for all students, another teacher's expertise and incentive to reach higher goals.

Wilson and Michaels (2006) found that post-primary pupils saw a number of advantages associated with team-teaching, including a wider range of instruction, teaching styles and perspectives that made more skill development possible. Wilson and Michaels also noted that team-teaching appeared to expand the learning opportunities for all students. O'Murchu (2011), discussing co-teaching between general and special educators, notes the need for these to be equal partners. He examines the possibilities offered by team-teaching to reposition learners previously withdrawn from classes and 'reframe' special provision.

Teachers then need to see learning as a negotiated and shared process and be able to use a variety of strategies to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. Ware et al. (2011) state that this may include the use of additional or different resources, the modification of the content of the lessons and sometimes the application of a specialist pedagogy.

In general, however, Davis and Florian (2004) concluded that teaching approaches and strategies used for learners with disabilities were not sufficiently differentiated from those used to teach all children to justify a distinctive 'special needs' pedagogy. They state that this does not diminish the importance of special education knowledge, but highlight it as an 'essential component of pedagogy' (p. 6).

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) explore three assumptions about the requirements for inclusive pedagogy: a shift in focus from 'additional needs' to learning for all; rejection of deterministic beliefs about ability; and ways of working with and through other adults that respect the dignity of learners as full members of the classroom community.

In later work on inclusive pedagogy, Florian and Linklater (2010) identified the following themes:

- *Developing an appreciation of the impact of ability labelling;*
- *New ways of thinking about teaching;*
- *Responding to individuals and offering choices;*
- *Taking risks, adapting the curriculum, and being surprised;*
- *New ways of working with others* (p. 374).

Baglieri et al. (2011) suggest that research in inclusive pedagogy should focus on the development of *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) as a way of analysing all teaching situations that can be useful to teachers (Hitchcock, 2002; Pisha, 2001; Scott, McGuire and Shaw, 2003). What is paramount, however, as indicated by Dyson et al. (2004) is a setting where all teachers feel responsible for the education of all learners.

7.3.4 Curriculum and assessment

Ware et al. (2011) note that teachers are responsible for implementing and differentiating the curriculum for learners with disabilities. Differentiation can be a crucial factor to ensure the participation of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms as it encompasses:

> *… adjustments to classroom organization and management, lesson content (including the provision of additional content), learning outcomes, resources (including additional staff support), pedagogy and assessment methods* (Ware et al., 2011, p. 9).

However, Sebba (2010) and Baglieri et al. (2011) suggest that differentiation may risk reproducing the same limits it purports to avoid (e.g. adaptation by teachers, rather than transformation of settings and teaching and learning routines putting the learner at the centre). Similarly, Persson (2012) reports on the risk of adopting differentiation, individualisation and ability grouping as ways of responding to learners' diversity in Sweden. In fact, research indicates that such procedures may impact negatively on learners' self-perception as well as teachers' expectations. It is therefore crucial to personalise learning, taking learners and parents' inputs into consideration. Agency work (for example: Meijer, 2005; Watkins, 2007; Agency, 2009d; 2011c) also provides further evidence that involving learners and giving them greater responsibility for their own learning is key in the development of inclusive practice.

Hrekow (2004), quoted in Frankl (2005), believes that schools must have a commitment to high quality teaching and learning for all pupils, otherwise they 'merely support an inappropriate curriculum by providing incremental amounts of support for individual pupils with SEN to ensure IEP targets are met'. Ware et al. (op. cit.) identify access to the mainstream curriculum as a key factor for the participation of learners with disabilities and highlight the following forms of support that are considered to be crucial in facilitating curriculum access: support for the class teacher in the form of other teachers with expertise in special needs education; support from visiting teachers and other outside professionals; and support from parents. Other factors include: resource availability, including the special needs assistant; generalised support from the school principal and other colleagues with a leading role; the possibility of planning in advance the provision needed within the school; and, finally, collaboration with parents and other specialised staff to plan and implement the IEP.

Research in the area of inclusive school practice in Italy indicates that a link between the IEP for learners with disabilities and the general class programme is needed to support access to the curriculum (Ianes, 2005). In order to ensure that such a link is maintained, collaboration between the mainstream teacher and the support teacher is needed. Ianes underlines how the provision of pedagogical support should: substitute the way in which information and communication are provided to learners (for example the use of Braille and computers); facilitate the provision of information (e.g. different contexts, people and use of examples that are experience-based); simplify learning objectives either at the level of understanding, processing and/or output of information; identify the core objectives of the discipline and present them in different ways (e.g. teaching history by referring to students' personal life stories); and, finally, focus on social participation (Ianes, 2005).

Among the barriers to curriculum access Ware et al. (2011) identify the 'lack of support, lack of time for collaborative planning, and no clear leadership in relation to SEN issues' (p. 5). In addition, they point out that teachers feel that the lack of appropriate training

opportunities, especially continuous professional development, can further contribute to limiting the access of learners with disabilities to the mainstream curriculum.

Regarding assessment, Rix (2009) sees the class as the most relevant setting for the learner, suggesting that teachers know what the learners actually need. He also suggests that a school assessment officer is appointed to co-ordinate and monitor assessment procedures within and across different schools in collaboration with teachers. As the focus would be on all learners of the class, and not only on learners with disabilities, issues around stigmatisation and labelling of individual learners could be avoided.

As indicated in the Agency work on Assessment in Inclusive Settings (Watkins, 2007), assessment that informs teaching and learning procedures, which is carried out by multi-disciplinary teams (including parents and children themselves), favours the successful inclusion of all learners vulnerable to exclusion, including those with disabilities. Inclusive assessment shifts the focus from assessment procedures that focus on diagnosis and resource allocation, often conducted outside the mainstream school, to on-going assessment that is conducted by class teachers to organise individual educational planning. Such assessment procedures allow schools and teachers to take responsibility for all their learners and to effectively address all their needs.

Summary

In this section, the importance of community collaboration and partnership working with a range of agencies, including the voluntary sector, has been emphasised, together with well co-ordinated multi-agency responses to learners and families. Schools should also be encouraged to collaborate and network to maximise the use of resources and share knowledge and skills.

At school level, it has been suggested that visionary leaders are needed to develop inclusive school cultures and encourage collaborative practice and innovation, which they themselves also demonstrate by sharing or distributing leadership tasks. School leaders, working to ensure quality, will find ways to value the full range of learner outcomes.

In order to develop appropriate provision, it is crucial that the voices of learners with disabilities are heard. Support should be provided as early as possible and while the IEP can play an important role in communicating needs and co-ordinating provision, the focus should be on enabling learners to take an active role and participate fully in the learning community.

While learning support assistants can be critical in supporting learners with disabilities in mainstream settings, this section stresses the need for reflection on the role of these paraprofessionals, ensuring that they take a wider support role and do not inadvertently contribute to learner isolation or stigmatisation.

In the classroom, teachers should find innovative ways to organise learners, valuing diversity and recognising that learning is a social process. Working with colleagues appears to increase teacher confidence and secure improvement, allowing teachers time and space to move from a focus on 'additional needs' to providing learning opportunities for all.

8. THE ROLE OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN A POLICY CLIMATE OF INCLUSION

At the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s the term ‘provision’ was mainly used to describe the type of setting (mainstream or special/segregated) used to educate learners with SEN. Early Agency reports (Meijer, 1998; 1999; 2003; 2005; 2006) showed that there was a general trend towards the integration of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools.

At that time, member countries could be divided into three main groups: one-track, multi-track or two-track, according to where most learners with SEN were educated. In the one-track approach, pupils with SEN were mostly educated in mainstream settings; in the multi-track approach, a multiplicity of approaches and placements were identified, with pupils being educated in a mixture of mainstream and special schools; and, finally, in the two-track approach, there was a strong division between special and mainstream settings and learners with SEN were mostly educated in segregated settings.

Florian (2005) points out that, in a time dominated by an inclusive agenda, the idea of special education as a parallel or separate system of education cannot be conceived. As a result, special schools in many countries are undergoing modification (Frederickson et al., 2004; Gibb et al., 2007). However, as an inclusive approach aims to respond to learner difference within the structures and processes of the mainstream sector, change across the entire education system is required.

With these reflections in mind, this section provides an overview of the current debates surrounding special schooling in a policy climate of inclusion.

8.1 The resilience of special schools

Recently the overall number of special schools has tended to decrease (Norwich, 2008; Goodley, 2011). While some special institutions have been transformed into resource centres (Meijer, 2010), others have been dismantled as a result of inclusive policies. Depending on the different interpretations of the concept of inclusion, however, researchers may argue for the maintenance, change or, alternatively, the disappearance of special schools.

Cigman (2007), for example, states that while a radical position of inclusion supports a total dismantling of special schools, a moderate position is in favour of the survival of special schools, especially for those learners with more severe disabilities. Supporters of this position argue that the philosophy and policy of inclusion have outpaced practice (e.g. Hodkinson, 2010), as not all children (or parents) want to attend mainstream schools (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). Many others also argue that mainstream schools are not ready to meet the ‘needs’ of learners with disabilities (Warnock, 2005; Cigman, 2007; Forbes, 2007).

Other researchers (Dyson and Millward, 2000; Slee, 2006; 2011; Gordon and Morton, 2008; McMenamin, 2011) see the presence of special schools as an anomaly of the inclusive education system and argue for them to be totally dismantled. In particular, Slee (2001; 2007; 2011) describes the tenacity of special schools as an example of the great resilience of the special sector, as well as a fundamental threat to the development of inclusion. An example of the resilience of special schooling is shown by the fact that such settings are now occurring within mainstream schools. McMenamin (2011), for example, talks about the ‘satellite units’ of special schooling within mainstream settings in New Zealand. The attractiveness of special settings to parents of learners with disabilities is well-known due to the low teacher-student ratios, small class sizes, individualised

programmes and caring and supportive staff. In Ireland, for example, Nugent (2007) found that while the inclusion movement supported the closure of special schools and units, parents preferred their children to be educated in special settings, at least at primary age. Another important consideration is that teacher education courses do not always provide pre-service teacher education about learners with disabilities, with the consequence that mainstream teachers are not adequately prepared (Ware et al., 2009). Mainstream schools often fail learners with disabilities, both in terms of the quality and the nature of education provided, with the consequence that many families continue to choose special schooling (Ofsted, 2006).

Despite the fact that the development of inclusive policies was envisaged as the beginning of the decline of special schools, this decline has failed to happen in many countries. Although the existence of special schools has become problematic, policy-makers cannot totally ignore their role (McMenamin, 2011). As Ainscow (2007) and Norwich and Gray (2007) have reported in their analysis of special schools in the UK, special schools should not feel undervalued and excluded from developments and should not be absent from policy.

With a great variety of opinions and positions about inclusion, some commentators (Croll and Moses, 2000; Cigman, 2007; Norwich, 2008; Ware et al., 2009; Terzi, 2010) have argued that segregated provision is likely to remain a feature of the inclusive education system, although with a different role. The following sections will investigate some possible scenarios for special schools that seek to avoid their isolation within the education system and the community, which can also result in the isolation of the learners that attend them (Rose and Coles, 2002).

8.2 Special schools: a new role

The move towards inclusive schools for all learners requires a reconsideration of the role and structure of special schools. Some commentators have argued for a change of the role of special schools from a provider of segregated education to a partner with mainstream schools in the provision of education (e.g. Gibb et al., 2007; Ware et al., 2009). Many others (e.g. Allan and Brown, 2001; Head and Pirrie, 2007) suggest that one possible scenario is the development of the special school as a resource centre for local mainstream schools, with increased collaboration between the mainstream and special sectors (European Commission, 2007; Meijer, 2010; Ware et al., 2009). Building links with the mainstream sector will not only increase the expertise of mainstream schools, but will also allow special schools to become crucial actors in the inclusion process. The literature investigated for this review indicates that, rather than being the chosen placement for the education of learners with disabilities, special schools can be seen as a form of support necessary to strengthen the capacity of mainstream settings (Norwich, 2008).

In a study in the UK, Baker (2007) argues that special schools have a vital position in the development of inclusion and that the future of special schools will probably be concerned with two themes: first, with the education of learners with severe disabilities; and second, with how to provide mainstream schools with their expertise through outreach support. Baker maintains that the debate should not be focused on whether or not special schools should be closed, but rather on the quality of the educational experience of learners. Similarly, in Ireland, Ware et al. (2009) indicate that the future role of special schools will be concerned with, on the one hand, addressing the complex needs of learners with disabilities in a continuum of provision and, on the other hand, supporting the work of

mainstream schools in a two-way collaboration and exchange of expertise between special and mainstream settings.

Other authors (for example, Rustemier, 2002; Bunch and Valeo, 2004) argue for the closure of all special schools, believing segregation to be discriminatory and damaging to young people and society and in breach of the principles underpinning the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Powell and Planck (2003) express the view that special schools lead to negative life course consequences and increased social inequality, due to a lack of educational opportunities and access to, for example, qualifications.

Norwich and Gray (2007) feel that for special schools to be part of an inclusive system, they need to see themselves as part of a local service existing to meet a range of needs. Furthermore, they need to be part of a local area inclusion 'process', working along the range of flexible continua to help create better opportunities more closely linked to the mainstream sector.

Many researchers (e.g. Attfield and Williams, 2003) suggest that special provision will in future take a variety of forms, from outreach services, to mainstream classes, through to specialist support, advice and/or consultancy to mainstream settings. If special schools are to contribute to such provision in their new role, their staff will need to develop new attitudes and skills to enable them to collaborate with other educational institutions and service providers and provide consultancy within the local community. The skills needed to work across wider settings in this way are not easy to achieve, especially in a short time (Gibb et al., 2007).

There is a need, therefore, to change attitudes towards disability and develop special schools that focus on collaborative practice, curriculum development, in-service training, the collection and evaluation of equipment and software and specialist assessment and advice for learners with disabilities (European Commission, 2007). As parents of learners with severe disabilities may still choose special schools, however, this should be taken into account when formulating inclusive policies (Baker, 2007).

8.2.1 The re-organisation of special schools across Europe

Meijer (2010) indicates that the transformation of special schools and institutes into resource centres is a common trend in Europe. He states that countries are developing or intend to develop a network of resource centres as a way of re-organising special schools. Such resource centres may have different names (i.e. knowledge centres, expertise centres or support centres), but in general they have similar tasks:

> *… provision for training and courses for teachers and other professionals; development and dissemination of materials and methods; support for mainstream schools and parents; short-time or part-time help for individual students; support to learners in entering the labour market* (Meijer, 2010).

Some countries, such as Austria, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, have already gained some experience of resource centres, while other countries, such as Cyprus and Portugal, are currently implementing such a policy (Meijer, 2010). Meijer shows that, in countries with a low incidence of special schools, their role in developing inclusion is modest (such as Norway or Italy), while in countries with a strong tradition of special education, special schools are more actively involved in the development of inclusion and support mainstream schools in this process. Consequently, in contexts with a limited

number of special schools, countries will have to address different challenges compared to those countries with a long tradition of special schooling (Meijer, 2010).

The majority of leaders in the special education sector agree with the principles of inclusion and with the need to change special school environments and personnel. As indicated by Delsarte (2012) in Belgium, for example, the process of 'integrating' learners with disabilities requires huge efforts in terms of personnel, materials, financing and resources and there is a call for the maintenance of special schooling as a partner in the process of implementing inclusion in the longer term.

Commentators (e.g. Macleod, 2006) indicate that the impact of the mainstreaming process has been both positive and negative for special schools. Head and Pirrie (2007), working in Scotland, argue that one of the negative consequences of more learners attending mainstream has been an increase in the diversity and complexity of learners attending the special school. This requires the development of new skills and approaches, particularly as special schools are also expected to offer the same curriculum and qualifications as mainstream schools.

Head and Pirrie (op. cit.) also report how the increased demand for therapy support from the mainstream sector has led to a perceived reduction in the support available for special schools. In addition, it seems that there are more learners moving into special schooling at secondary level. This may be either as a result of the long process of reaching a diagnosis or as a result of under-equipped mainstream schools.

In Ireland, Ware et al. (2009) suggest that there is a need to ensure continuous professional development for all teachers in mainstream and in special schools to ensure that they develop specialist skills appropriate to particular groups of pupils, as well as collaborative skills to work with their colleagues.

In Malta, the Department of Student Services of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport has moved to change special schools to resource centres. In its consultation document (2009) it found that, as special school numbers decreased some challenges became evident: special schools had to cater for a wide range of ages and levels across a small number of pupils, putting a strain on specialisation in the curriculum. Such schools also failed to provide appropriate experience for different phases of education, as learners attended the same school from primary through to secondary and possibly beyond. Maintaining special schools while placing increasing numbers of learners in mainstream schools also required replication of resources and lead to insufficient opportunities for staff to share practice. Special schools in Malta have therefore been developed into resource centres to provide a range of services, including support to mainstream schools.

The Working Group for Special Schools in the UK has conducted a study on the future of special schools and their new role in the wider framework of inclusion. This study reinforces the idea that special schools need to provide high quality education and care for learners with disabilities and ensure effective partnership working between special and mainstream schools, the wider community and health and social services (Department for Education and Skills – DfES, 2003). In addition, the study indicates that special schools will take the lead in helping mainstream schools to develop more inclusive environments, capable of meeting the diversity of the student population. What becomes crucial is that both types of schools, mainstream and special, do not develop in isolation, but become part of a wider community of support and learning. A further possibility is discussed by Ware et al. (2009), who suggest an investigation of the dual enrolment of learners with

disabilities which would enable them to spend time in both special schools and mainstream schools.

In a report by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DENI, 2006) and in the review conducted by Ware and colleagues (2009), special schools are considered to be important partners in the assessment of learners' needs and in the preparation and implementation of IEPs. Hunter and O'Connor (2006) describe a survey of the role of special schools which recommended that they further develop outreach services, share enrolment of pupils, provide specialist and short-term support, video-conferencing and e-support and inter-disciplinary planning and co-ordination of services. With health services they are also moving towards providing support for local areas as learning centres of excellence.

8.2.2 Developments beyond Europe

In their three-year study of inclusive practice in California, Burstein et al. (2004) indicate that, as a result of inclusive policies and practice, special education classes in mainstream schools increased their collaboration with mainstream classes in different ways. Each school developed a different model, depending on the complexity of the school environment, the availability of support and the staff commitment to the principles of inclusion. In some cases, special education classes were eliminated and replaced with collaborative teaming and team-teaching in mainstream classes, while in other schools special education classes continued to exist, but with an increased exchange with the mainstream to respond to the requirements of some learners (e.g. pull-out/pull-in activities). Finally, there were examples where special education classes and learners with disabilities took part in mainstream activities only as part of specific programmes.

Forlin and Rose (2010), working in Hong Kong, outline the following enabling factors in developing a resource centre model:

- Clear roles are defined for classroom and special education teachers;
- Paraprofessionals are used to support general classroom management, rather than allocating them to specific students;
- Relationships are established over time with flexibility to provide on-going support;
- Teachers understand the benefits of child-centred practice for all and create appropriate incentives for mainstream teachers to seek training in special education/inclusion.

Lapham and Papikyan (2012), working in Armenia, suggest that authorities arrange expertise and provision of services to allow for both regularly planned support, as well as ad hoc requests from schools. This gives the resource centre model both specificity and intensity to bring about changes in pedagogical practice. Some barriers within this model are noted, however, including inflexible staff, inappropriate teaching approaches and parental anxiety (Gibb et al., 2007; Head and Pirrie, 2007).

The recommendations from this work include the provision of support to special school staff to promote inclusion and publicise their services, for example assessment and support for professional learning communities, and the development of collaboration among teachers and multi-disciplinary teams in schools. There is general agreement that an inclusive school culture and inclusion-team specialist knowledge are important enabling factors for success (Gibb et al., 2007).

National policies on inclusive education, therefore, need to take special schools and their new role in supporting mainstream settings into account. From an inclusive perspective, Ainscow points out that, while in the short and medium term special schools need to develop into forms of support for the mainstream setting, in the long term special schools are destined to disappear. This, however, implies only a dismantling of special schools 'in bricks and mortar' (Ainscow, 2007b, p. 138) – the skills and resources that special schools currently provide will need to be maintained.

8.3 Special and mainstream school collaboration

The education of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings has given way to the development of a *continuum of provision* (Norwich, 2008; Benoit, 2012). Educational settings fit along this continuum that goes from the most separate provision (full-time, residential special school) to the most inclusive provision (full time in a regular class). Hall (2002), working in the USA, writes that, overall, school systems must provide a full range (or continuum) of placement options. However, Hall goes on to suggest that the term *array* replace *continuum*, as the latter connotes an ordered sequence of placements from most to least segregated, suggesting a hierarchy of classes in which students 'get promoted' to higher (more segregated) levels. An *array* implies a range of services, 'none inherently better than any other', from which a person can chose the service to best meet their needs (2002, p. 151).

Researchers (e.g. Norwich, 2008; Rose and Coles, 2002) argue that an inclusive agenda should re-appraise the role of special schools to support the development of inclusive practice and, as outlined above, develop closer links between the special and the mainstream sectors to ensure that all learners within mainstream classrooms receive appropriate levels of support (Rose and Coles, 2002). Mainstream schools need support and advice from special schools, in particular where they have developed expertise in responding to the needs of a specific group of learners (e.g. those with autism or profound and multiple disabilities) and have developed as centres of excellence or resource centres able to support the work of both the mainstream sector and the local community.

In Australia, Forbes (2007) emphasises that inter-dependent and collaborative models of working between special and mainstream schools are particularly important because the rapid disappearance of special schools could result in a lack of specialised personnel able to meet the specific requirements of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings. She points out that there is a need to augment the systemic capacity of mainstream schools and to provide them with specialised knowledge and support by increasing the opportunities for collaboration between the two sectors.

Collaboration and the building of partnerships between special and mainstream schools is not always easy. Ofsted (2006) reports on the difficulties of mainstream schools in establishing effective collaboration with special schools and, equally, the problems experienced by special schools in providing adequate responses and services to mainstream settings.

Special and mainstream schools can collaborate in many different ways (Sydney, 2010). The forms of collaboration already in place between the two sectors have had an impact on the organisation of special schools, which are increasingly arranged along the lines of the mainstream school. However, such collaboration must be formalised (Rose and Coles, 2002), for example, by ensuring that there is a regular exchange of expertise between the

special and the mainstream school to prevent the special school from becoming isolated and to allow the mainstream school to benefit from the special sector's expertise.

Rose and Coles (2002) studied the development of partnerships between the special and mainstream sectors, focusing on approaches specifically deployed to support learners with physical disabilities. The collaboration between the two sectors resulted in mainstream teachers becoming more confident about teaching a diversity of learners and, similarly, in special schools, teachers making changes to their teaching as a result of observations made in mainstream classrooms (for example, reducing the dependency on learning support assistants for some learners in special schools). Most importantly, learners with disabilities and their parents report that, despite the challenges of attending a mainstream school, they have all benefited from being transferred from special to mainstream classrooms.

Burnett (2005) similarly identifies gains for mainstream and special schools as a result of a partnership between the two sectors, as both gain from collaboration and experiences of diversity. Learners who have been segregated for many years are able to attend the mainstream school and interact with their peers, while staff from both mainstream and special schools are able to share strategies for teaching a diverse range of learners. The creation of partnerships may also present an opportunity to gain additional funding to improve the environment and obtain more resources.

Burnett also indicates that partnerships among special and mainstream schools improve learner outcomes: 'the stronger the partnership, as in the case of most co-located or satellite provisions, the greater the productivity and ability to meet the needs of the pupils with SEN' (2005, p. 14). Another important factor is service delivery and the quality of educational opportunities offered to learners with disabilities, and these also appear to increase along with the wider range of partnerships established (Burnett, 2005).

In addition, the possibility of sharing risk and responsibility, as well as developing creativity, are further benefits of partnerships between special and mainstream schools, together with the possibility of accessing resources such as specialist classrooms, ICT resources, multi-sensory rooms and hydrotherapy pools and the sharing of specialised staff.

Some researchers (Warnock, 2005; Forbes, 2007; Cigman, 2007) have reported on the possible consequences of a gradual loss of specialised knowledge and personnel while mainstream teachers are not yet ready to meet the needs of all learners. Forbes, in particular, argues that an inclusive model should be based on an accountability system that measures 'what students know and can do, rather than placement and inputs' (Forbes, 2007, p. 68). She states that schools can only be made accountable for learners' achievements by providing a 'continuum of services' where teachers in the mainstream schools are provided with direct support – not only consultancy – from specialised personnel. In such a model, teachers can work 'shoulder to shoulder' with peer teachers and have clear directions on the knowledge and skills to be taught to learners. Teachers must also be supported by school leaders who understand that regardless of the setting, quality education is needed by all learners.

An interesting example of collaboration between mainstream schools and special schools has been carried out in Northern Ireland with the supervision of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI, 2012). In the project, 24 special schools collaborated with local mainstream schools on joint curriculum projects. The findings from this one-year project

provide information about the processes of collaborative planning and joint working and found that four elements were crucial to successful collaboration:

- *Identifying a clear rationale and strategic approach to collaborative working.*
- *Deploying resources and agreeing shared responsibilities to enable the collaborative work to progress smoothly and to address any difficulties that may arise.*
- *Building a collaborative ethos and school commitment to inclusive planning.*
- *Monitoring and evaluating the impact and establishing the sustainability of further collaborative action and outcomes* (ETI, 2012, p. 2).

Hornby and Kidd (2001) suggest that, due to the difficulty of finding employment, the last years of schooling for learners with disabilities should be more oriented towards vocational education and social inclusion (DENI, 2006) and should also be characterised by transition planning and support networks in order to provide learners with the necessary skills and tools to be included in society. They argue that if:

> *students with mild learning disabilities are to be successfully included in mainstream schools, then these schools need to develop the ethos, resources and procedures necessary to provide appropriately for such pupils* (Hornby and Kidd, 2001, p. 15).

Summary

In summary, this section has outlined the resilience of special schools that are often supported by parental preference for specialist services and the need to maintain staff expertise. The role of such provision in a policy climate of inclusion, including the development of a supporting role for mainstream provision, may include staff professional development, direct support for learners and the provision of specialist resources – all of which will increase the mainstream sector's capacity to deal with the full range of diverse learner needs. Drawing on Senge (1989), Ainscow states that the special school is developing into a 'learning organisation' as it is 'continually expanding its capacity to create its future' (Ainscow, 2007b, p. 135). Head teachers and senior leaders of special schools, despite being at a crossroads between maintenance and development, are embracing the challenge of inclusive education that may include developing new forms of governance, new forms of classroom and staff organisation, new financial arrangements and the ability to work with different stakeholders in order to maintain a continuity of services to learners with disabilities while also developing their role in relation to mainstream settings. Special school leaders need to have a problem-solving approach in order to guarantee that the needs (traditionally provided in special settings), rights and opportunities (traditionally provided in mainstream settings) of learners with disabilities are safeguarded in the inclusive school (Ainscow, 2007b).

9. RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND APPROACHES TO FUNDING

While the development of inclusive education requires access to resources and support services, more effective use can often be made of existing resources to support learning, especially in poorly resourced settings (UNESCO, 2005). There is a clear understanding that, without the necessary support, people with disabilities will not be able to participate fully in school life and, consequently, in society. The *World Report on Disability* (WHO/World Bank, 2011) indicates that the provision of assistance and support are fundamental pre-requisites for participation in society by people with disabilities. It states that inclusion is not only concerned with schooling, but with the entire community, of which schools represent an integral part.

According to Meijer (1999) and Campbell et al. (2003), funding is a key factor in understanding the organisation of provision for learners identified as having SEN, as there is a strong link between the funding available and the way in which learners are educated. In line with these earlier analyses, funding is still considered to be a fundamental issue, primarily in terms of the way in which budgets are allocated and organised. Although the issue of funding will only be addressed marginally in this review as a new Agency project is planned on this topic in 2014, the main issues around funding mechanisms and the allocation of resources will be discussed below.

9.1 'Levels' of support

In most countries across Europe, learners seen to have 'additional' needs will be assessed to ascertain the level and nature of support required. Many Agency member countries use national systems of classification/categorisation to identify problems, assess students' educational or support needs, allocate resources, make placement decisions and inform policy-making. Recommendations emerging from different areas of Agency work (e.g. Agency, 2009d; Watkins, 2007) advocate a move away from any form of classification system that leads to the labelling and/or placement of pupils based on categories of need (see also Daniels, 2006) towards an understanding of what benefits pupils. This is in alignment with the research conducted by Florian et al. (2006) who argue that, in addition to the purposes set out above, such systems can also be used to: '(a) shift the responsibility from one group of professionals to a different group and (b) relocate certain children from one setting to another' (Florian et al., 2006, p. 39), with possible long-term consequences. Florian and colleagues point out that while the system of classification may vary a great deal between different countries, a medical model of disability that uses classification schemes usually underpins them and, more recently, the NESSE report (2012) similarly notes that country systems of classification are underpinned by different conceptualisations of difference and normality. Hollenweger (2011) stresses the importance of eligibility criteria, seen as the gatekeepers to resources and services for learners with disabilities. She indicates how eligibility criteria, which are usually based on diagnostic criteria, are fundamentally political tools that often depend upon the social groups' capacity to lobby for economic benefits.

Other researchers (e.g. Armstrong, 2003; Daniels, 2006) also report the need to interrogate procedures of identification, classification and categorisation of disability which they see as 'dividing practices' (Foucault, 1994 in Rix, 2009) that may reproduce forms of discrimination, despite their overt purpose to do otherwise. Rix (2009) remarks that although classification procedures and the related labels are the gatekeepers to resources, they nevertheless act as a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement. Thus,

although it is often suggested that the label is required to ensure appropriate support, the issue is complicated (Hollenweger, 2011; NESSE, 2012; Norwich, 2008). On one hand, the labelling process justifies the allocation of extra resources and ensures that reasonable adjustments are made; on the other hand, labelling may lead to 'social segregation and the development of a spoiled identity' (NESSE, 2012, p. 20). Learners may also be described by their labels, for example the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder child, the autistic child and this, in turn, may constrain learners' identities into preordained characteristics (Rix, 2009). In addition, labels do not always provide the information that educators need in order to understand and overcome the barriers that learners may encounter.

Recently, new approaches have been developed, such as the Capability Approach (Terzi, 2010) that focuses on the requirements of the learners with disabilities without the need to categorise them or identify their needs. The UNCRPD (2006) also attempts to move in this direction and provide for a legislative framework based on human rights without the need to label learners, in order to allow them the same rights to (and in) education as their peers without disabilities (Rioux et al., 2011). Rioux et al. put forward the view that to ensure that human rights are not breached and abuses are not perpetuated, a new 'sophisticated' understanding of disability is needed that goes beyond the individual pathology. As Jones (2011) remarks, such a perspective leads to the recognition that people with disabilities are rights-bearers and not people in need of charity or welfare.

Some authors (Armstrong, 2003; Mitchell, 2010) have noted that a great number of learners from ethnic minorities, Afro-Caribbean backgrounds and Roma or traveller children are more routinely identified as learners with SEN. Similarly, the OECD (2007) indicates that boys are identified as learners with SEN more often than girls. Such data suggests that the identification of learners with disabilities does not always focus on the learners' needs, but is shaped by a series of external factors, such as educationalists' attitudes, the structure of the school and local services and the organisation of teaching and learning that may reflect discriminatory social attitudes towards some learners. In summary, as noted by the NESSE report (2012), gender and social class may become risk factors as boys and learners from disadvantaged groups are more likely to be classified as 'needy'. As outlined above, such a process of stigmatisation often triggers poor educational outcomes and less chances of success for those learners who have been classified as different.

Lebeer et al. (2010) developed a framework of graded learning support in an attempt to move away from the medical model of disability. This framework aims to provide individual learners with support at five levels, not only in relation to their functional difficulties, but also in relation to environmental barriers. Similarly, in Finland, support for learning is provided according to three levels: while general support is what learners would get as part of the everyday teaching and learning process, intensified and special supports are based on specialist pedagogical assessment procedures. Sahlberg (2011) points out that up to half of all students completing their education at age 16 have received some special/additional support at some point in their schooling. In such a model, additional support increasingly becomes the norm for all learners, reducing any of the negative stigma often attached to special education. Itkonen and Jahnukainen (2007) also raise an important issue – that the common strategy internationally is to repair problems as they occur, rather than trying to prevent them from happening. More countries now recognise this and are increasing their focus on early intervention.

For example, Ellis et al. (2008) describe provision mapping, a method increasingly used in the UK to identify the provision made for pupils with disabilities or any additional support needs within schools. Here, interventions may be classed as wave 1, 2 or 3 and the emphasis is on the provision needed to ensure progress, rather than on a deficit model, moving through stages, in some cases to secure additional resources (as outlined on page 37). However, Ellis and colleagues also report that critics have expressed concern about the loss of an individual approach.

9.2 Approaches to funding

Although the cost of inclusive schools is difficult to determine, there is a general understanding that inclusion is cost-effective (UNESCO, 2009; WHO/World Bank, 2011). A cost-effective approach to the organisation of provision for learners with disabilities becomes increasingly important in times of economic crisis and expenditure cuts and it would be potentially dangerous to link the education of these learners to the (re)-distribution of limited resources. Although additional resources are ultimately important for the development of inclusive settings, it has been noted that schools and local bodies can get involved in a continuous struggle to obtain more resources for a limited number of learners or to rationalise the existing resources without investigating how the systems themselves contribute to the creation of 'needs' (Thomas and Loxley, 2001; Frattura and Capper, 2007; Slee, 2007).

Lloyd (2000) raises the criticism that over-dependence on resources reflects the fact that inclusion is currently seen as a simplistic matter of relocation and resourcing, rather than as a fundamental issue of responding to diversity based on social justice and equity. Hunt et al. (2003) similarly stress that, in order to respond to the educational needs of students at risk and those with disabilities, schools are required to unify and re-allocate resources. The literature investigated for this review indicates that one of the main problems with funding inclusive education is not the lack of resources, but rather the inefficient use of existing resources (Slee, 2007).

Ainscow and West (2006) indicate that it is essential to analyse how school resources are used to support learners' achievements in terms of classroom arrangements (interactions between teachers and students, teaching repertoires, etc.); management arrangements (deployment of staff and resources); and contextual arrangements (engagement with local stakeholders and the link with the community and other support agencies).

If schools focus on quantity rather than quality of resources, they are unlikely to make the necessary changes to the way that mainstream systems and school staff respond to learners (Frattura and Capper, 2007) or develop relational and inter-relational aspects of resources, including flexibility, creating networks with other schools and increasing the number of local partnerships (Slee, 2007). Schools, rather than struggling with the limited 'additional' resources and support available for them, can develop networks of support involving collaboration between local stakeholders and the school (Lacey, 2000; Ainscow, Muijs et al., 2006; Benoit, 2012; Ebersold, 2012).

Nevertheless, adequate funding must be available for schools to be provided with necessary resources (e.g. personnel, materials, ICT aids) for all learners. The WHO/World Bank (2011) indicate that funding results in more inclusion-oriented provision if it is decentralised to a local level and based on the total enrolment of pupils.

In describing the different funding systems used within Agency member countries, Meijer (1999) identified a series of key themes that need to be addressed in order to understand

how systems of funding are arranged and, consequently, how they can impact upon the development of inclusive education. He underlined that it is necessary to go beyond a description of how funding is arranged in mainstream settings for learners with disabilities, to investigate who makes decisions concerning the funding. Very often, decisions are made in the learners' best interests, but an analysis of the people involved, together with their goals, is necessary to ensure that learners with disabilities are adequately provided for. Similarly, it is necessary to examine how finances are used within the school (e.g. for materials, specialist staff, support teachers, etc.) to understand if funding is deployed for the purposes for which it was designated. Another crucial aspect is the participation of school actors, families and learners with disabilities themselves to understand if funding is used effectively and efficiently.

Meijer identified a series of funding models, using two parameters: destination locus (who gets the funds) and the conditions for funding (the conditions for allocation or indicators). In relation to the first parameter, Meijer reported that funding could be delivered to the clients of the educational systems (the pupils or parents); to schools – special or mainstream (regular); to groups of schools or other regional institutions/units, such as resource centres; and to municipalities, districts or provinces (Campbell et al., 2003).

In relation to the second parameter, Meijer identified three categories of indicators: input, throughput and output (1999, p. 152):

- The input funding model is when funding is allocated according to 'measured' needs, which can be identified at the different locations, hence the number of learners with disabilities in a school, region or municipality. Inputs can also be based on referral rates or low achievement scores.
- The throughput model is based on tasks or functions that have to be undertaken, hence funding is allocated on the condition that certain services are provided or maintained by the different bodies (school, municipality or region).
- The output model allocates resources on the basis of the output: for example, the number of referred pupils (the lower, the more funds), or achievement score (the higher, the more funds).

All these models, Meijer argued, could be combined and could result in different effects and outcomes for the education of learners with disabilities and their families.

The WHO/World Bank (2011) indicate that, to date, there have basically been three ways of financing special education:

1. Through national budgets (for example via a special national fund);
2. Through financing the particular needs of institutions for materials, teaching aids, training and operational support;
3. Through financing individuals to meet their needs.

Some countries are characterised by a combination of these three; others instead use only one method.

Drawing on the World Bank report (Peters, 2004), it emerges that funding for learners with disabilities usually reflects divergent paths between the northern and southern countries. Whilst northern countries usually rely upon municipal and government formulae for the allocation of funding, southern countries instead usually focus on the capacity of the communities and co-ordinated services. In addition, the World Bank report indicates that in

northern countries, government funding can be divided into three different models: child-based model, resource-based model and output-based model. The child-based model, which has already been discussed by Meijer (1999) as an input-based model, counts the number of learners with disabilities as a way of distributing resources. Although the advantage of this model is to tie funds to individual students, the disadvantage is the focus on the disability label and the high cost of diagnostic procedures, with little consideration for the individual's specific educational needs.

The resource-based model (also discussed by Meijer, 1999, as the throughput model) is based on the services provided, rather than on child counts (Peters, 2004, p. 24). The advantage of this model is that funds are provided depending on the type of services and programmes offered and the disadvantage is that they tend to fit learners into existing programmes and services without evidence from monitoring or evaluation to demonstrate the success of the programmes. Finally, there is an output model, which ties funding to student achievement. The advantage of such a model is the accountability component, but the disadvantage is that some schools may choose not to refer learners with disabilities to special services so that they do not have to account for their low academic scores. Clearly, each model has advantages and disadvantages and it is not easy to identify which model is most efficient for the development of inclusion in the present context.

Depending on the different political and administrative systems, schools can be funded through federal, state or local resources (Frattura and Capper, 2007). If funding is allocated to learners with disabilities in a categorical way, this may encourage the phenomenon of labelling and may subsequently create a perverse cycle for funding schools: that of increasing the number of diagnoses to obtain more resources, either due to the propensity of teachers to label students or of families to ensure that their children receive additional assistance. Frattura and Capper (2007) stress the fact that very often the increase in learners' eligibility for funding is tied to an increase in funding for a specific school. It then becomes crucial to investigate whether the increase in the number of labelled learners who are eligible for support is the result of poor instructional practices or otherwise.

Giangreco and Suter (2009) report that in Vermont, USA, the schools that report the lowest incidence of learners with disabilities are provided with less resources than those that identify a higher number of learners with disabilities. Such a situation increases the likelihood of labelling and stigmatisation and runs counter to an inclusive perspective that sees specialist teachers as a support for all learners and not only for those identified as having disabilities.

In an analysis of how English Local Educational Authorities fund special education needs, Marsh (2003) indicates that the provision of resources and funding to schools that welcome learners with disabilities is usually provided in a discontinuous way, despite a continuum of needs, which includes all learners that have difficulty at school, with or without a Statement of SEN. In addition, a special needs discourse that focuses on individual needs seems to predominate over a 'school and teacher effectiveness' discourse that focuses on the way that schools provide for all learners. In particular, he brings to the fore the lengthy bureaucratic procedure that is often required in order to obtain resources and notes that the statutory process to assess learners' needs often slows down the work of school and staff. In a more recent study, Richards (2012) indicates that the statutory assessment process is often costly and does not always guarantee the quality of the provision or the support needed by learners with disabilities, often being too dependent on specialist resources.

In an international project on funding measures, Rix (2009) reports that in all 29 participating countries, the focus was on the individual child. He puts forward a social/democratic model that focuses on the wider community in which the individual operates and in which barriers are faced. In order to maximise the possibility of equitable delivery of resources to all learners, Rix suggests that funding could be allocated according to a class assessment model (described in Section 6), based on a national banding system. Resources would be allocated using different levels of identified support and not based on a conglomeration of individual assessments. Rix states:

> *By shifting to an educational, class-contextualised assessment it moves the focus from the individual in isolation, reducing the need to institute dividing practices. However, it does not negate the opportunity for individuals to identify themselves through the assessment process, nor for them to engage with specific labels or groupings. It does mean however, that they do not need to do so in order to gain access to learning support* (2009, p. 265).

Marsh (op. cit.) indicates the importance of considering what forms of monitoring and evaluation of finances are available to support the school or the municipality. He underlines the crucial importance of accountability in understanding what schools are achieving with their additional resources, taking into account the relationship between expenditure, educational process and learning outcome. It is therefore crucial that the way that institutions and municipalities use existing resources and their impact on learners' achievement is monitored (Frattura and Capper, 2007; ETI, 2012; Ofsted, 2006). In order to do this, Marsh (2003) suggests that the following principles or criteria are considered in the formulation of funding measures: simplicity (i.e. administrative transparency); equity (objectivity in the distribution of resources); effectiveness; responsiveness to needs; efficiency, stability of funding, cost containment and accountability.

The literature investigated for this report, however, indicates that the issue of accountability is rather weak or non-existent and that the money that is allocated to arrange provision for learners with disabilities is often used for other purposes (e.g. RNID, 2007). Clearly, a means to assess the use of resources, especially in terms of learner outcomes and achievement, is needed. Wilkins (2008) suggests that one possible way of addressing this issue could be to require schools, or local authorities, to account for the money spent on learners with disabilities to the community and possibly to parents. The study conducted in Northern Ireland (ETI, 2012) on collaboration between special and mainstream schools, has also particularly emphasised the importance of monitoring and evaluating how funding has been used to promote collaborative working and the benefits to schools.

The World Bank report (Peters, 2004) provides some examples of longer-term cost-saving measures that can be used in order to resource inclusive education. These measures can be both internal and external to schools and include: teacher training and professional development strategies, such as using the expertise of people with disabilities to train teachers and trainers; centralised resource centres and outreach programmes and co-operatives that provide support to clusters of schools; the use of children as tutors; and community-based rehabilitation programmes, planned with the participation of people with disabilities.

Overall, there should be flexibility in the way in which resources are used, depending on the needs of the local actors (in particular families and learners with disabilities) and not as a result of centralised rules. It is important that the concept of support is interpreted not in

terms of the quantity of resources allocated to a specific category of learners (i.e. learners with disabilities or identified as having SEN), but in terms of the development of the school system (Ainscow, Booth et al., 2006).

Summary

The further development of inclusive settings, rather than a reproduction of special schooling within the mainstream will only take place if the issue of resources is managed in a way that improves the capacity of the entire mainstream school to respond to the diversity of the student population (Ainscow, Booth et al., 2006). This requires a move away from the allocation of resources linked to categories which can have negative consequences, such as segregation and low expectations. Increasingly, debate centres on approaches based on human rights and a focus on early intervention in order to allocate support without labelling learners.

These approaches should avert the struggle to obtain ever-increasing resources for small numbers of learners and seek to re-allocate them to system re-organisation and improved accountability in order to provide a more equitable and inclusive education for all learners.

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This literature review has considered the changes and challenges faced by different countries as they develop systems of support that contribute to the implementation of inclusive practice. The conceptual framework provided by this review sees disability as a series of social, economic, cultural and political barriers that need to be identified and removed. Specifically, the review maintains a human-rights approach to disability and the need to provide resources to all learners without the need for categorisation or labelling, often linked to medical diagnoses. The conceptual framework also supports the view that a move towards inclusive practice requires the transformation of the school system as a whole, in particular through collaborative practice at all levels and between all agencies, putting learners' views at the centre of all developments.

Inclusive education may differ depending on the context in which it is developed and implemented. The literature review has attempted to show that, following the advice of Alexander (2012), we should look for the principles that underpin effective educational practices observed elsewhere, not merely copy the practice. He suggests that these principles can be 'debated, domesticated and re-applied – or not' (p. 11) and says that it is not the specific policies and practices that have universal applicability, but the underlying principles. This review, although not comprehensive, attempts to highlight some of the common elements across different contexts in order to move thinking on to 'what works' in helping all learners to succeed.

These issues include:

- inclusion as a process that requires changes in the whole education system, rather than simply where learners with disabilities are educated;
- the need to increase the capacity of regular schools and develop their competence to benefit all learners, which may include developing the role of special schools to provide training, support and specialist resources;
- the importance of listening to learners and their families in the organisation of any additional support;
- the development of 'inclusive' attitudes and beliefs in teachers and the will to take responsibility for all learners so that, as Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) say, learners do not have to 'leave to learn' (p. 3);
- the importance of distributed leadership to ensure a positive culture and ethos in all schools;
- the importance of networking and collaboration in providing support at all levels, including school-to-school collaboration (mainstream and special schools) and partnerships with other agencies to provide support to individual learners in the local school and community;
- the development of equitable funding approaches which aim to improve the school system for all learners through collaboration, rather than providing an incentive to identify and label learners.

Inclusion, therefore, involves changing the culture and the organisation of regular schools and the communities they serve in order to ensure the full participation of all learners (Mittler, 2000). What must be kept in mind is that learners are the key stakeholders in the inclusion process and that their voices must be heard when planning improvements to the

education system. This change process will also respect the right of learners with disabilities to participate in the decisions that concern the organisation of support (Winter and O'Raw, 2010).

It is hoped that this literature review provides both ideas and inspiration in moving towards improved support for learners with disabilities in inclusive settings where, according to Chapman et al., difference is 'seen as being less a source of difficulty and more a stimulus for continual school improvement' (2011, p. 3). This report emphasises, in agreement with Chapman et al., that 'the most important factor is the collective will to make it happen' (p. 19). Finally, to quote the *State of the World's Children 2013* Report (UNICEF, 2013): 'The path forward will be challenging. But children do not accept unnecessary limits. Neither should we.' (Foreword).

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