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**IBE-UNESCO Preparatory Report for the 48th ICE on**

**Inclusive Education**

**Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future**

**Nordic Countries Preparatory Workshop of the 48th Session of the International  
Conference on Education**

**Helsinki, Finland**

**6 – 7 March 2008**

## **Abstract**

The International Conference on Education (ICE) is a major international forum for educational policy dialogue among Ministers of Education and other stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs). The ICE is organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE), the UNESCO institute specialized in assisting Member States in curriculum development to achieve quality Education For All. The IBE Council, composed of 28 UNESCO Member States, has proposed in January 2007 that the 48th ICE session, to be held in Geneva in November 2008, should focus on the theme “Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future”. The 48th ICE will focus on broadening the understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education while discussing how governments can develop and implement policies on inclusive education. The IBE is hosting a series of regional preparatory workshops dedicated to exploring and advancing inclusive education in preparation for the ICE 2008. The Nordic Countries Preparatory Workshop of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education was held in Helsinki, Finland on March 6-7, 2008. This event was organized by the Finnish National Board of Education, and the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO). The venue of the conference was the Helsinki Congress Paasitorni/Tarja Halonen. This report addresses the country and thematic presentations shared during the workshop with focus on the conception and practice of inclusive education in five participating countries, and the ideas proposed by participants on what the next steps should be on how to advance inclusive education policy and practice in the region.

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## **Introduction**

The IBE-UNESCO, through the Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development<sup>1</sup>, is organizing a series of Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education with the overall goal of initiating a participatory and consultative process, to highlight key issues and challenges in Inclusive Education to be presented at the 48th session of the International Conference of Education (ICE 2008).

There are a number of critical dimensions contained in the inclusive education agenda. Each preparatory regional workshop centres on four sub-themes around which the IBE Council has proposed to articulate the 48th ICE.

- a) Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content (to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education);
- b) Inclusive Education: Public Policies (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education);
- c) Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions (to create education systems which offer opportunities for life-long learning); and
- d) Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs).

The IBE Council understands the conference as an opportunity for promoting dialogue among Ministers of Education, highlighting some universal and complex issues, and engaging the audience. The ICE should play a pivotal role in orientating and clarifying the debate on Inclusive Education. The IBE Council also proposes that the ICE should be

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<sup>1</sup> IBE, in conjunction with curriculum specialists from different regions of the world, set up from 2005 onwards, the Community of Practice in Curriculum Development (up to the moment made by 697 members from 85 countries). It is understood as an open and plural worldwide space that contributes to generate collective thinking and action on curriculum issues within the framework of a holistic approach to determining and implementing the Education for All (EFA) goals.

based on evidence and involves the Ministers of Education in enriching discussions on evidence-informed policies.

As the ninth ICE-related workshop, the Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future Nordic Countries Preparatory Workshop of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education had the objective of exploring and discussing policies and practices of inclusive education in the region within a program framework organized around the following components: a) Five National Reports on Inclusive Education b) Thematic presentations on inclusive education c) Group work discussions and regional contribution –Road Map, Nordic Countries - for ICE 2008. (See Seminar’s Program, Appendix 2).

Twenty-nine participants including ministerial representatives, policy-makers, and educators from five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden participated in the seminar, accompanied as well by representatives from the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS, UNESCO Paris); Education For All Flagship; and the International Bureau of Education, UNESCO (See participants list in Appendix 1)

This report<sup>2</sup> should be useful to introduce the conception, policy and practices of inclusive education in the region as presented during the workshop. Methodologically, the report is organized as follows: After an introduction, the first section of the report provides a background on inclusive education based on the United Nations normative framework. The second section discusses key conceptions and practices of inclusive education. In line with ICE 2008 sub-themes, the third section addresses the current status of inclusive education in the five participating countries, followed by a section addressing three thematic presentations on inclusive education. Information presented in the third section is derived directly from country and thematic presentations, discussion and seminar notes. The final section, as a conclusion, presents the proposal of a regional

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<sup>2</sup> This report was prepared by Mr. Renato Operti ([r.operti@unesco.org](mailto:r.operti@unesco.org)) and Ms. Carolina Belalcázar ([c.belalcazar@unesco.org](mailto:c.belalcazar@unesco.org)), with the assistance of Ms. Jayne Brady, Ms. Leana Duncombe, and Ms. Isabel Guillinta Aguilar; Capacity Building Programme, International Bureau of Education, UNESCO.

road map that participating countries developed towards the end of the seminar, presenting the various actions workshop attendees considered necessary with respect to developing inclusive education practices in the region.

## **I. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: UNITED NATIONS NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Building a truly inclusive society, where all people learn together and participate equally hinges on providing a quality education for all. The United Nations Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, clearly lays down the foundation for the Education for All movement. It states:

Everyone has the right to education and education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom<sup>3</sup>.

Inclusive education seeks to address the diverse learning needs of all children. This is further supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, which states that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on the basis of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the 1994 World Conference on “Special Needs Education: Access and Quality” in Salamanca, Spain. It was restated at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities proclaiming participation and equality for all.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education call upon member states to guarantee the implementation of inclusive education in order to bring back children who are excluded into the mainstream educational system. According to the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education means that:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. They should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and nomadic

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (2007). In the *United Nations Website*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights website: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups<sup>4</sup>.

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000) further supports previous initiatives by calling upon nations to address the needs of learners who are victims of marginalization. It states:

Education for All (...) must take account of the need of the poor and most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health, those with special learning needs<sup>5</sup>.

The Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities<sup>6</sup> (2006) specifically addresses the right of all persons with disabilities to education (article 24). In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that (a) persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability; (b) persons with disabilities can access an inclusive and free quality primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; (c) reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided; (d) persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education and (e) effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

Providing quality education for all remains one of the biggest development challenges of our times but with effective legislation and policies it is possible to contribute to build a

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<sup>4</sup> The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. (1994). In the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

<sup>5</sup> Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All. (2000). In the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/framework.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml)

<sup>6</sup> [www.un.org/disabilities/convention/](http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/)

world of inclusion, not only for people with disabilities, but also for all those who are unable to exercise their basic human right to education.

## II. CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is a growing universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed regions. Inclusive education is also an evolving concept useful to guide strategies of educational change addressing the sources and consequences of exclusion within the holistic framework of the EFA goals and the understanding of education as a human right.

### 2.1 SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Traditionally and even today in various world regions – for example, in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and most parts of Asia<sup>7,8,9</sup> the concept and practice of inclusive education have been mainly limited to students categorized as having special needs, meaning mainly those with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as refugees. Under this perspective, the approaches and responses given to students' needs have been mostly remedial and corrective, consisting of the setting up of special schools and curricular tracks and by increasing the number of special education teachers.

One significant consequence of differentiated curricular and institutional structures for students categorized as having special needs has been their marginalization and even segregation within the education system. Likewise, these children are learning to live separately from society, instead of learning to live together as a main part of it. The assumption that there are “special needs children” is questionable, as stated by Stubbs, “any child can experience difficulty in learning [...]; many disabled children have no

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<sup>7</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006. *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>8</sup> IBE, 2007 International Bureau of Education (IBE) 2007. *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”*, Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE, IBE/2007/RP/CD/06.

<sup>9</sup> IBE, 2007 International Bureau of Education (IBE) 2007. *Report on the International Workshop on Inclusive Education – East Asia*, Hangzhou, China, 2-5 November 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE, IBE/2007/RP/CD/08.

problem with learning”<sup>10</sup> and “children with intellectual impairment can often learn very well in certain areas”<sup>11</sup>.

## 2.2 INTEGRATION

The concept of integration came to the fore in the 1980s, as an alternative to special needs curricula and school models, with the objective of placing students identified as having special needs in mainstream schools. The restructuring and improvement of physical facilities and the provision of learning materials, along with the increase in the number of special education classrooms and specially trained teachers in mainstream schools were, and still are, some of the main components for the application of integration models. Mainly focused on students with mild impairments, integration risks becoming a rhetorical device rather than a reality in practice; it can become a spatial change of school classrooms rather than a change of curricular content and pedagogy relevant to children’s learning needs and capabilities.

After the 1990s, the scope, objectives, contents and implications of inclusive education in relation to integration considerably changed. This was principally due to the recognition that integration models solely based on closing special schools and “inserting” students into mainstream schools and curricula did not respond to the diversities of learners’ expectations and needs. Such an understanding has prompted the revision of educational policies dealing with integration issues by questioning the relevance of the curriculum and school models that are the same for all students, regardless of their differences. In such models, students must *adapt* to the norms, styles, routines and practices of the education system instead of the education system changing according to the learner. Moreover, dropout rates may increase among students with special needs when they are integrated into mainstream schools that have not undertaken a comprehensive set of institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes.

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<sup>10</sup> Stubbs, S. 2002. *Inclusive education: where there are few resources*. Oslo: The Atlas Alliance, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

## 2.3 INCLUSION

Inclusive education can be understood as a guiding principle to attain reasonable levels of school integration for all students. In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to respond in a personalized way to learners' diversities. In this sense, education systems have the obligation to respond to the expectations and needs of children and young people, considering that the capacity to provide effective learning opportunities based on a rigid scheme of integration (placing "special needs" students in mainstream schools) is very limited. This is what Peters<sup>12</sup> refers to as the "continuum of placements" paradigm; that is, when inclusive education is conceptualized as a place and not as a service delivered. The debate on inclusive education and integration is not about a dichotomy between integration and inclusion policies and models, but rather about identifying to what extent there is progress in the understanding that each school has the moral responsibility to include everyone. Such requirement is also challenged when education systems have to address effectively other core universal education issues such as poor school attendance, repetition, dropouts, and low learning outcomes. Empirical evidence indicates that a student who repeats the first school years has a strong probability of dropping out of school altogether<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>. Each of the above problems and the combination of them generating exclusion are exacerbated by persistent institutional and pedagogical practices (e.g. frontal teaching) which assume that all children have the same learning conditions and capabilities. Moreover, as noted during the 2004 International Conference on Education<sup>16</sup>, a child's exclusion from education leads to a

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<sup>12</sup> Peters, S. 2004. *Inclusive education: an EFA strategy for all children*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1998. *Wasted opportunities: when schools fail; repetition and drop-out in primary schools, Education For All, Status and Trends*, Paris: EFA Forum Secretariat, UNESCO.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1996. *La Repetición Escolar en la Enseñanza Primaria Una Perspectiva Global*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1984. *The drop-out problem in primary education: some case studies*. Bangkok: UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2004. *International Conference of Education. 47th meeting. Workshop 2: Quality education and social inclusion*. Geneva: UNESCO IBE. Available online at: [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Wdocs/Wdocs\\_main.htm](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Wdocs/Wdocs_main.htm), pp. 8–14

lack of the professional and social competencies needed in order to access essential knowledge and to exert an autonomous and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, over approximately the last fifteen years, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools. The focus is on generating inclusive settings, which should involve: (a) respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversity (responding to the expectations and needs of students); (b) providing equal access to quality education; (c) close co-ordination with other social policies.

A broad conception of inclusive education also addresses the learning needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, as conceptualized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development<sup>17</sup>. Such conception refers to the inclusion of children with educational needs related to learning difficulties caused by organic pathologies and/or to behavioural or emotional disorders. OECD also addresses learning difficulties in children due to a problematic interaction between the student and the educational context or to disadvantages related to socio-economic or cultural/linguistic factors. Although there are the above categories to consider, the nature of the concept of inclusive education is non-categorical, and aims at providing effective learning opportunities to every child, in particular tailored learning contexts.

UNESCO defines inclusion precisely thus: “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the

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<sup>17</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006. *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD.

responsibility of the regular system to educate all children”<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, as stated by Booth and Ainscow<sup>19</sup> in their proposal of an *Index for inclusion*, “inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students. [...] It is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements”.

Indeed, the design and the development of policies on inclusive education should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts in favour of specific groups (an endless and quite possibly incomplete list). On the contrary, the focus is not on categories but on the provision of friendly learning environments and diverse learning opportunities for all. According to Tutt<sup>20</sup>, the main challenge is to provide inclusive settings in all schools, through the provision of a diverse continuum of services that are part of a school network linked to other social policies.

The challenges of attaining inclusive education are therefore also related to the provision of a comprehensive set of policies aimed at: (a) a pertinent and relevant curriculum with a vision that facilitates dialogue among various actors of the education system; (b) a vast repertoire of diverse and complementary pedagogical strategies (formal and non-formal schooling) that can respond to the specificities of each student by personalizing educational provision; (c) available physical facilities and equipment aligned with the designed curriculum and its implementation; (d) strong teacher support in the classroom—seeing the teacher as a co-developer of the curriculum; and (e) engaging in dialogue with families and communities in order to understand their expectations and needs, as well as to promote their active participation in the schools.

An inclusive educational strategy implies the careful and detailed consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of each child and adolescent so as to provide them with

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: ensuring access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>19</sup> Booth T., Ainscow, M. 2002. *Index for inclusion, developing learning and participation in schools*. Bristol, UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Tutt, R. 2007. *Every child included*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing/The Association for all School Leaders (NAHT). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005. *Human development report 2005: international cooperation at a crossroads: aid, trade and security in an unequal world*. New York, NY: UNDP. Available on-line at: [hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/](http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/)

effective educational opportunities throughout their lives. In these terms, inclusive education is about the ways and the modalities under which teachers and students interact with each other and generate mutual empathy and closeness; how they understand and respect their diversities and jointly create suitable and attainable conditions for achieving relevant and pertinent learning opportunities for all.

Cognitive education plays a key role in achieving inclusive education as it tends to make children aware of their own cognitive functions, which can help them to understand and learn better. It is an effective way for educators to address the needs of diverse populations by better understanding how students learn, think and reflect, critically and creatively, and how this understanding can be used in the construction of a meaningful curriculum and related learning.

As a contribution to the discussion of pedagogical approaches of inclusive education, Skidmore<sup>21</sup> draws attention to the differences between a pedagogy of deviance and one of inclusion by noting the following five aspects:

- a) *Student's learning*: while the deviance discourse establishes a hierarchy of cognitive skills to measure the abilities of each student, the inclusion discourse highlights the open learning potential of each student, which can be progressively discovered and stimulated.
- b) *Explanation of school failure*: while the deviance discourse points out that the main learning difficulties are related to the deficiencies of the students' capacities, the inclusion discourse argues that the main difficulty lies instead on the inadequate responses generated by the curriculum.
- c) *School response*: while the deviance discourse states that the learning process should be focused on the students' deficiencies, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need for reforming the curriculum and of implementing a cross-cutting pedagogy in the school.

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<sup>21</sup> Skidmore, D. 2004. Inclusion: the dynamic of school development. London: Open University Press, pp. 112–127

- d) *Theory of teachers' expertise*: while the deviance discourse emphasizes the importance of specialized discipline knowledge as the key to the teachers' expertise, the inclusion discourse highlights the active participation of the students in the learning process.
- e) *The curriculum model*: while the deviance discourse argues that an alternative curriculum should be designed for those students categorized as low achievers, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of a common curriculum for all students.

In overall terms, inclusive education implies four key elements:

- a) It is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity, as well as of trying to learn how to learn from differences.
- b) It is linked to the motivation and development, through multiple strategies, of students' creativity and their capacity to address and resolve problems.
- c) It comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, experience quality learning and attain valuable learning outcomes.
- d) It implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

## 2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The urgent need to advance in the democratization of opportunities that would enable all children to access and profit from a high-quality equitable education draws on the conception of inclusion as a guiding principle to foster educational and social change. Inclusion from an educational perspective can help address the traditional and structural problems of poverty, the challenges of modernization and social and cultural integration, and the growing diversity of national societies. Social inclusion and inclusive education are mutually implicated in a feedback relationship. Inclusive education seeks to address forms and contents of exclusion, such as the social gaps in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs); the marginalization of disaffected young people (those who do not study, do not work and do not look for work); the lack of educational

opportunities and low learning outcomes among migrant populations; the cultural homogeneity of educational proposals that are not exposed to, or do not understand and value multiculturalism, and the stigmatization of cultural and social diversity as an obstacle to inclusion.

Inclusive education can therefore be considered a pathway to attain social inclusion. From a societal perspective, inclusive education is clearly and substantially linked to the discussion around the type of society to be attained; the kind of well-being desired for all citizens; and the quality of democracy and social participation we wish to pursue. On a long-term basis, education in relation to social inclusion implies an understanding of the former as the key to citizenship and as an essential component of social policy.

Along those lines, the relationship between social inclusion and education highlights central issues of inclusive education related to: (a) the struggles against poverty, cultural and social marginalization and exclusion; (b) the consideration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as both a right and a learning context within a framework of shared universal values; and (c) the protection of the rights of minorities, aboriginals, migrants and displaced populations.

In the light of these issues, the following points are critical in understanding and advancing the conception and practice of inclusive education:

- a) Identifying the significance and priority given to inclusive education in governmental and state policies. Inclusive education, as a key social policy, is a powerful instrument to mitigate the negative effects of social inequalities and cultural disintegration, as well as residential segregation. Inclusive education is useful in addressing the changing cultural, ethnic, migrant and social composition of schools, a major challenge to the development of efficacious and efficient government social policies.
- b) Fostering high-quality equitable learning opportunities for all by considering the articulation, diversification and flexibility between the different ladders and

- pathways of the education system, its structures and contents, within a global and unified vision of basic and youth education.
- c) Developing a tailored approach to providing a real opportunity for educational success for each child by focusing on the learning needs of both potential and current students (those who have never attended school, those who are currently attending and those who have dropped out), taking into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities as well as their ethnic origin, philosophical and religious beliefs and migrant status. Diversity in learning contexts should be considered as a challenge and an asset to education and not as an obstacle.
  - d) Guiding, articulating and undertaking efforts and initiatives aimed at generating suitable conditions for achieving meaningful and relevant learning by conceiving the school as the main force for educational change, as well as an integrated institutional and pedagogical unit within a solid educational policy and shared curriculum framework, from early childhood to youth education.
  - e) Renovating and recreating teachers' professional roles taking into account their ethical and societal mission and responsibility. Teacher training and professional development should strengthen the ways in which teachers understand, approach and respond to students' differences; teaching styles should be revised and adjusted in order to be aligned with cultural and social contexts that are increasingly complex and uncertain; teachers should be considered as co-designers and co-developers of inclusive education policies at the school and classroom levels, and not as mere implementers of curriculum change.

In overall terms, the transition towards inclusive education implies collective thinking and action on: (i) the concept of social justice and social inclusion; (ii) the beliefs around the learning potential of each student; (iii) the conceptual frameworks that sustain good teaching and learning practices; and (iv) endorsing a comprehensive political and technical vision of curriculum encompassing processes and outcomes<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Nind, M. 2005. Inclusive education: discourse and action. *British educational research journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, April, pp. 269–275.

### III. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

#### A. PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

##### 1. Denmark<sup>23</sup>

###### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

In Denmark there is no formal definition of inclusive education as such. However, inclusive education is implied in a three-fold approach. Inclusive education can be understood as all students having the right to a quality education that meets the needs of each child, ensuring that each child develops his/her full potential. The approach of inclusive education also encompasses the provision of special needs education in special need settings (e.g. classroom or specialized school) and educational differentiation involving tailored teaching methods around the individual student needs. More recently, educational goals in Denmark are focusing more on education quality, emphasizing that the child is at the centre of all teaching and learning processes. The child's needs are the main principle with the aim of fully developing the child's potential.

When defining the scope of inclusive education, various groups of children needing special attention in Denmark's education are identified by the Ministry of Education (MOE). For example, students in the last years of compulsory basic education, which involves the first nine years of education (Folkeskole<sup>24</sup>), need more attention than those students in the lower levels who are performing much better than the former. Behavioural and social disorders in children also require particular attention. Students with autism, language difficulties, and those coming from difficult socio-economic backgrounds are identified as needing a more tailored approach of education. Students transitioning from the nine years of compulsory Folkeskole (public school) to general upper secondary education, either in the form of the

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<sup>23</sup> Information in this section was adapted from the country power point presentation and discussion notes on "Inclusive Education in Denmark", presented by Ms. Anna Sofie Weigaard Jorgensen of the Ministry of Education of Denmark in the Nordic Countries - Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> The Folkeskole consists of one year of pre-school class, nine years of primary and lower secondary education and a one-year 10th form; pre-school and 10th form are not compulsory (Danish Ministry of Education). Danish Ministry of Education, Fact sheet: The Folkeskole, 2008, [http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact2.htm?menuid=2510%20\(current%20edition\)](http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact2.htm?menuid=2510%20(current%20edition))

Realskole (vocation education school) and the Gymnasium (academic-orientated)<sup>25</sup>, as well as students with special talents are to be given special attention. Finally, the MOE also noted the need to give attention to students who are at a disadvantage due to their “social inheritance”, meaning their ethnic background and low socio-economic status.

### *Public Policies*

According to the Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993<sup>26</sup>, the objectives of the Folkeskole imply a close collaboration with parents to develop students’ acquisition of knowledge, skills, working methods and ways of expressing themselves. These aims should contribute to the overall personal development of each student. The Folkeskole is also expected to create opportunities for experience, industry and absorption that develop the student’s awareness, imagination and an urge to learn, so that he/she acquires confidence in his/her own possibilities and a background for forming independent judgments and for taking personal action. Furthermore, the role of Folkeskole is also to familiarise students with Danish culture and to contribute to their understanding of other cultures and of man's interaction with nature. The school is meant to prepare students for active participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy. Therefore, the teaching of the school and its daily life must be built on intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

The Folkeskole Act and related Executive Orders set standard regulations concerning the leadership and organization of the school system. In addition, the Act enumerates standard requirements concerning the subjects that are to be taught at the specific form levels and standard regulations. The Danish Ministry explained that the main purpose of this system of common regulations was to provide a sense of continuity for children who move between schools and, at the same time, accommodate for the diversity and freedom of each school to incorporate their own local characteristics.

The Folkeskole is the responsibility of the municipalities and, in turn, it is the municipal board that is responsible for ensuring that every child in the municipality receives a free education. At an administrative level, municipal boards determine the level of service for the

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<sup>25</sup> Danish Ministry of Education, Fact sheet: General Upper Secondary Education, 2007, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact6.htm?menuid=1520>

<sup>26</sup> Section 1, Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993, Danish Ministry of Education, 2003, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/laws/folkeskole.htm?menuid=2010>. Please note, this Act was amended in 1993 and began to be implemented over 1993 and 1994). Danish Ministry of Education, Fact sheet: The Folkeskole, 2008, [http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact2.htm?menuid=2510%20\(current%20edition\)](http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact2.htm?menuid=2510%20(current%20edition))

Folkeskole and may set their own additional objectives for the schools. In particular, the municipal board is responsible for setting the targets and framework for the activities of the school, determining how the municipality's schools are to be organized in practice and supervising the activities of the schools. For example, their role relates to the decision-making with respect to scholarships, teacher recruitment, the division of schools amongst municipalities, the respective school structures, and the final approval of school curricula<sup>27</sup>.

Denmark is undergoing a municipality reform, helping municipalities govern schools with the use, for example, of quality reports. These reports describe the municipality's school system, the schools' academic level, the measures the municipal board has taken in order to evaluate the academic level, and the steps the municipal board has taken in response to previous assessments. Within this reform, action plans are proposed for schools that have not reached the desired level.

The MOE also noted several policy changes in the educational agenda as supportive of inclusive education. For example, the child has to be fully integrated as part of the mainstream classroom including as well the provision of support outside the normal education time so that student does not miss any subjects and that the progress is measured in what is being taught. More emphasis has been given to the organisation of special needs education as part of the education system.

The MOE also highlighted that there is a National Action Plan in Denmark for the improvement of reading skills, to reform the Folkeskole system in response to Denmark's results in PISA 2000 which were not satisfactory; they showed that Denmark lay around the OECD average in reading, and that almost one in five children left the Folkeskole without adequate reading skills. Such weaknesses were identified where schools did not pay adequate attention to early reading problems, and schools also failed to counter the efforts of home disadvantage. As part of the evaluation process reforms, schools must now administer mandatory and regular tests in reading. The emphasis on key skills has also been underlined

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<sup>27</sup> Section 40 (2) Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993, Danish Ministry of Education, 2003, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/laws/folkeskole.htm?menuid=2010>.

across the curriculum, in particular through the upgrading of the professional skills of teachers who teach reading, mathematics, English and science thanks to in-service training<sup>28</sup>.

The opportunity for children and parents to choose freely their school of preference was also signalled out with importance. Parents choose within or out of the municipality. This choice is limited by the number of open places; parents pay for transportation to pupils who attend another school than the district school with the exception of students who have been referred for teaching in another municipality<sup>29</sup>.

In relation to special education services, the MOE noted the creation of the National Organization for Knowledge and Specialist Consultancy Centre (VISO) for the purpose of providing specialist advice and expertise. This Centre forms part of the Danish National Board of Social Services, an independent subdivision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which aims “to promote new development and initiatives in social services while also supporting and counselling local authorities in providing services to citizens, i.e. children, young people, socially marginalised groups, elderly and disabled”<sup>30</sup>. The National Organisation for Knowledge and Specialist Consultancy (VISO) concentrates in particular on adults, children and youths, as well as the provision of special education services, research and documentation centres<sup>31</sup>.

At the same time, the MOE noted the following challenges that could be leading to exclusion in education and that should be considered by policymakers. For example, teachers need more training in building their capacity to propose methods of pedagogical differentiation to address the needs and expectations of students’ with special needs. At the same time, the increase of children receiving special needs education in special classes or specialising schools is a growing concern. The use of new technology is also presenting challenges of exclusion for some students. The MOE also noted the lack of knowledge sharing and good

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<sup>28</sup> Review Of National Policies For Education, Follow-up report prepared by the Danish Ministry of Education, Follow-up on the 35 recommendations in the OECD report on the primary and lower secondary education system in Denmark (2004), 2008, <http://us.uvm.dk/folkeskolen/internationalt/generelinfo/documents/DenmarksFollow-uptoOECDRecommendations-4April2008.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Article 26(6) of the Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993, Danish Ministry of Education, 2003, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/laws/folkeskole.htm?menuid=2010>.

<sup>30</sup> VISO is the Danish abbreviation for "National Videns- og specialrådgivningsorganisation" which translates into the National Organisation for Knowledge and Specialist Consultancy; Danish National Board of Social Services, 2007, <http://74.125.39.104/search?q=cache:i1zxJjt5NLQJ:www.servicestyrelsen.dk/wm142447+%22National+Organisation+for+Knowledge+and+Specialist+Consultancy%22&hl=fr&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=ch>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

practice within the field as hindering the advancement of inclusive education in Denmark. In this regard, the MOE highlights the importance of gathering and sharing good practices with respect to inclusive education policies and practices at national and regional levels as a way to advance in the implementation of inclusive education in all Nordic countries.

### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

In Denmark, each school is responsible for ensuring the provision of quality education. The Danish curriculum provides freedom of choice about teaching methods and materials as only a part of the Danish curriculum is determined from the central level. Indeed, the Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993 simply enumerates standard requirements and regulations concerning the curriculum in relation to the so-called “Common Objectives” for teaching in the individual subjects. This includes the aims of subjects, the final objectives (central knowledge and proficiency areas) and the threshold objectives (including the progression of the subject, 2-3 years). However, the curriculum, the standards for progression and the continuity of the teaching towards threshold and final objectives are determined at the local level. For example, it is for the school board to draw up a proposal for the curricula of the school for submission to the municipal council<sup>32</sup>.

In the context of the links and transitions between the different levels of the Danish education system, the one-year pre-school class is emphasised as setting the foundation for the entire school’s educational programme and as providing cohesion between the transition from home life and/or day care centres to their schooling and then between the later transition to the next levels of schooling<sup>33</sup>. The MOE also highlighted the importance of preventing drop-outs as an objective of inclusive education. The moment of transition between basic education and upper secondary education was considered particularly crucial in Denmark. In order to give appropriate attention to achieve a coherent transition between such levels, the MOE has initiated several measures. For example, youth education has been introduced for special children with special needs. The MOE also provided a new 10<sup>th</sup> grade as an accommodating “bridge” to vocational education or upper secondary education for students who do not know what they want to do after 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Furthermore, the MOE has provided vocational traineeships in workplaces to give young people the opportunity to explore vocational

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<sup>32</sup> Section 44, of the Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993, Danish Ministry of Education, 2003, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/laws/folkeskole.htm?menuid=2010>.

<sup>33</sup> Danish Ministry of Education, Fact sheet: The Folkeskole, 2008, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/fact2.htm?menuid=1515>

opportunities and to help them decide whether they should go back to upper secondary education or continue in vocational education.

In terms of examinations, students undergo school-leaving examinations, at the conclusion of form levels 9 and 10. This is compulsory after form level 9. The school-leaving examination after the 10th grade is voluntary and brings higher academic demands on the students than those after the 9th form. The results of the examinations at the conclusion of the 9th form level leave students with a strong academic background as they complete the Folkeskole. This then enables them to have more opportunities for their higher education.

In support of the education system, the government has a number of linguistic initiatives promoting the role of inclusive education. For example, the MOE notes the development of second language pedagogical approaches. Along those lines, there is screening of material for language testing of bilingual students, in addition to the development of teaching material for these students<sup>34</sup>. Teaching in Danish as a second language has also been permanently provided when necessary to bilingual children in pre-school class and in form levels 1-9<sup>35</sup>. The Minister of Education is responsible for establishing the regulations concerning education in Danish as a second language to bilingual children and concerning mother-tongue tuition of children from Member States of the European Economic Area, as well as the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

In addition, the MOE notes various general initiatives to complement the inclusive education approach of the Danish education system. For example, the MOE organises the provision of computers to all 3rd graders, including projects for promoting interactive whiteboards and the development of digital special needs materials. The MOE has also made efforts towards an anti-bullying campaign to prevent exclusion and created a “talent fund” to support the education of gifted children.

### *Learners and Teachers*

The MOE noted how in the Danish education system individual tailored pedagogical approaches are being used to address the diverse needs of students. Learning is also developed within interactive groups of learners. For example, one approach is the part-time practice of teaching to student teams, which occurs across the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> forms – for both practical and

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<sup>34</sup> Section 4, *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Section 5 (7), *Ibid.*

pedagogical reasons<sup>36</sup>. The students' team can be composed of learners selected from different classes within the same form level or from different form levels. This enables grouping students according to their individual background and development level. Students' learning outcomes also help determine team formation and in such case teaching is characterised by, for example, focusing on specific skills or providing specific tailored challenges to the students.

The MOE also noted that teacher training in Denmark needs to better enhance teachers' capacity and skills to address the diverse needs of learners. Moving in this direction, the role of teachers was highlighted as pivotal in students' learning process. In Denmark every class has a *class teacher*, who has key role in implementing differentiated teaching and in evaluating students' learning outcomes, as well as to ensure coherence and progression for the entire teaching programme<sup>37</sup>. The class teacher also has a central role in the teacher-student relationship of the Danish education system; the class teacher has the main responsibility amongst all the students' teachers to monitor and support the subject-specific and social development of the students. The class teacher also aims to ensure cooperation between the school and the learners' home. Denmark has introduced individual study plans to evaluate each student and to communicate with parents. In particular, the class teacher works closely with the student to determine the targets they are trying to reach and the most appropriate learning methods. Lastly, the MOE explained that the class teacher coordinates the organization of teaching in the context of interdisciplinary teaching efforts and the compulsory topics<sup>38</sup>. In doing so, the class teacher collaborates with other educational staff, such as the supplementary reading counsellor.

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<sup>36</sup> Section 25, Folkeskole (Consolidation) Act of 1993, Danish Ministry of Education, 2003, <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/laws/folkeskole.htm?menuid=2010>.

<sup>37</sup> For example, section 18, *Ibid*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

## 2. Finland<sup>39</sup>

### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

In Finland, inclusive education is understood as the provision of education in a way in which each student receives sufficient and timely support both for learning and development processes. Inclusion is understood as a principle that calls for modification in the system and operational structures, encouraging a change in culture and pedagogical methodology that will promote all students' success in their studies and a positive growth in their development. The long term objective of inclusive education is to integrate individuals into society by ensuring access of every child to education, social and health care services, family life, housing, employment, and a constructive social environment. Furthermore, inclusive education means guaranteeing the possibility of full competence and empowerment as citizens to all people.

In the Finnish case, special education was also highlighted as a key component of inclusive education. The purpose of special education is to assist and support students so that they have equal opportunities to complete their compulsory education taking into account their individual learning needs in a process of education that also involves interacting with the diversity of other peers. Society has changed showing more evidently the degree of emotional problems in the population. It was noted that parents in Finland are now more aware about children receiving special support and insist about their child receiving such support. In this sense, it was noted that the diversity of students and their various learning needs should be used and valued as an asset and not as an obstacle in the education process of all children.

### *Public Policies*

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education was presented as one of the main instruments of national education policy in Finland. According to the National Core Curriculum, the starting point in education begins by responding to the child's strengths and to his/her individual developmental and educational needs as early as possible. Pedagogies must support the student's initiative and self-confidence. The foremost objective of this

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<sup>39</sup> Information in this section was adapted from the country power point presentation and workshop notes on "Inclusive Education in Finland", presented by Ms. Pirjo Koivula, Counsellor of Education of the Finnish National Board of Education; complementary information is based as well on that provided through the website portal of the Finnish National Board of Education; Nordic Countries, Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

curriculum is to support the student's studies so that the objectives conforming to the general syllabus can be attained.

Within a decentralized system, local authorities in Finland are generally responsible for providing basic education. Local authorities assign children a place in a local school, but students are free to enrol in some other school as long as there is an available place. In 2007, there were a total of about 3,300 comprehensive schools, with a school network covering the whole country. The smallest schools have less than ten students, while the largest have over 900<sup>40</sup>. In addition to public schools, there are also some private schools.

The provision of education in Finland is always based on the principle that any student in need of support for learning and development, including those with a special needs, will be provided with education as part of mainstream education at such student's local school, by means of sufficient support measures.

The new Strategy for Special Needs Education, which started on 14 March 2006, was highlighted with importance. In this regard, the Ministry of Education appointed a steering group to prepare a proposal of a long-term strategy for the development of pre-primary and basic special education. This strategy paper was published in November 2007. In addition, Section 3 of the Basic Education Act was presented as setting the context for the provision of special support in education: "Education shall be provided according to the pupil's age and capabilities and so as to promote healthy growth and development in the pupil." The Basic Education Act, Sections 31, 31a, note that a disabled child or a child with special educational needs has the right to receive assistance to participate in education. For example, the child may benefit from interpretation and assistance services - other educational services; special learning materials and equipments. Section 32 of the Act indicates that each student is entitled to free transportation when school access is too difficult, strenuous or dangerous when considering the student's age or other circumstances.

Municipalities in Finland generally have autonomy on how to allocate and use resources. At the moment, the State has allocated more financial resources for special support. Nevertheless, it was also noted that the amount and use of such resources vary according to the various degrees of municipal autonomy and to considerable budgetary cuttings. The

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<sup>40</sup> Finnish National Board of Education, <http://www.oph.fi/english/page.asp?path=447,4699,4847>.

resources that municipalities receive for special education support are not ear-marked; funding to the municipality is student-based; that is, according to how many students have been defined as needing special needs education, prolonged education or as having a severe illness or disability. These and other categories and the data supporting them are gathered from the municipalities based on trust. At the same time, it was underlined, in educational practices there are no “straight categories”. The categories are used for financing purposes and for identification of the resources that are needed. Thus, special education is understood as a form of non-stigmatising support. Multi-professional assistance coming from municipalities as resource centres was highlighted as important to develop in order to improve the quality of tailored support needed at the school level.

As will be detailed further below under learners, it was also highlighted that special education support is one of the many kinds of supports that can be provided for the benefit of the child. Thus, support should be flexible to provide all kinds of tailored approaches, including for example, among other, methodologies of differentiation, special education support, remedial teaching, and part-time special needs teaching. Some children can manage with only a small amount of support or with temporary support, and some need special support for a longer period, even during all school years. Specifically, special support was noted to be given for example, in reform schools, hospital schools, special schools, special classes, inclusion, and as part time special education.

It was noted that cross-disciplinary research conducted in universities and research institutes regarding the pedagogical effectiveness of stepped-up support and special education should be increased. It was also recommended that the central education administration should review the situation and development needs in stepped-up support and special education regularly by means of analyses conducted every five years.

At present, 233 municipalities have a budget of 7,4 M € for projects to develop stepped-up and special support for schools; there are also 116 municipalities and 20 private schools with a budget of 4,4 M € to develop guidance and counselling; this in addition to the Ministry of Education support to in-service teacher education.

Finally, it was noted that a decentralized evaluation approach of education systems in which schools are assessed and supported as a whole without national school inspections applies well in Finland.

### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The comprehensive schools' model in Finland was referred to as the kind of model that, with institutional and curricular flexibility, makes a positive difference in education processes and outcomes in Finland. As noted above, the Finnish education system is based on providing all children and young people with equal basic education services. In Finland, education is compulsory, starting the seven years of age and ending at sixteen. Both municipal and private day-care services are available for children below school-starting age, up to the age of six. All 6-year-olds are entitled to pre-school education for one year before starting basic education. Pre-school education is available in both schools and day-care centres<sup>41</sup>. Cooperation between pre-primary education and basic education, and between basic education and upper secondary level education is considered an important dynamic that supports cohesive transitions in the Finnish education system.

As noted by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), children normally start their comprehensive school education in a local school indicated by the municipality. Having completed comprehensive school, students can continue their education in upper secondary schools or vocational schools. Some upper secondary schools specialize in education with an emphasis on music, physical education, the fine arts, languages or the natural sciences, for example. The schools have no grades. The goal is to complete the courses in three years. The upper secondary school-leaving certificate qualifies the student for studies in universities and other university-level institutes. Matriculation examinations are arranged twice a year. Upper secondary schools for adults also provide an opportunity to take the matriculation examination and to supplement the upper secondary school curriculum. Vocational schools provide vocational qualifications. These studies take three years. Practical training is part of vocational school education. In addition to written exams, professional skills must be demonstrated in practice. Completing vocational education qualifies the student to seek admission to polytechnics or universities. Finland also operates an apprenticeship training system. Young people already in working life can obtain basic vocational qualifications through apprenticeship training<sup>42</sup>.

In Finland, a broad based curriculum is created and used with flexibility to develop the full potential of students. The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the goals and main

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<sup>41</sup> Finnish National Board of Education; <http://www.oph.fi/english/SubPage.asp?path=447,4699>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

content of basic education by setting the national core curriculum, as guidelines that govern all education providers. The latest guidelines for the National Core Curriculum for basic education were issued in 2004. This curriculum also defines the so-called cross-curricular themes, which are themes that integrate upbringing and education. At the local level, the curriculum guides the school's practical teaching and educational work. Educators draw up local municipality-specific or school-specific curricula based on the guidelines for the National Core Curriculum and legislation. Highlighting the importance of collaborative participatory approaches in education at the school and community level, parents have the opportunity to participate in drawing up the school's curriculum and in determining educational objectives<sup>43</sup>. The school is where every teacher is able to meet the various kinds of educational needs that children have; the school, should ideally, reflect a tolerant society in which diversity is addressed as an asset and not an obstacle to learning.

According to the Basic Education Act, as referred to by the FNBE, the purpose of assessing a student is to guide and encourage his/her study and to develop his/her self-assessment skills. As noted by the FNBE, assessment should support and guide students in a positive manner, in line with basic school assignments. In addition to learning outcomes, the targets of assessment include students' schoolwork and the entire learning process, as well as their conduct. The FNBE defines national criteria for student assessment. Pupils are given reports at the end of each school year; in addition, pupils may be given one or more intermediate reports. In the first seven forms of comprehensive school, assessment may be either verbal or numerical. Later the assessment must be numerical, but it may be complemented with a verbal assessment. Elective subjects may be assessed verbally, numerically or with a pass/fail mark, or in some other way as determined in the curriculum<sup>44</sup>. In general, the FNBE notes that the National Curriculum 2004 focuses on the individual growth rate, and assesses the student in a way that is supportive during schooling and that at the end provides some criteria that help teachers to understand the individual achievement compared to the national level of achievement.

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<sup>43</sup> Finnish National Board of Education; <http://www.oph.fi/english/page.asp?path=447,4699,4847>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

## The development of inclusion

The development of inclusion establishes that separate curricula of special education have been abolished and that all students use the same individualized curriculum following an individual education plan. Inclusive education implies new models regarding management and support service at the municipal level, school and student-level planning, and an organisation and implementation of inclusive special needs education. To support inclusion in local schools there is a network that works at state, regional and local levels. There are state owned schools that work as competence centres. They involve the know-how services concerning all areas of learning difficulties and provide support to municipal resource centres. There are also regional/municipal resource centres, where teaching, assessment, rehabilitation, materials, and equipment are available for schools, at the same time that support is given the provision of consultative services.

## Support

When arranging education for a special needs student, the local school's abilities to teach such student will always be explored first. This also involves assessing the resources and support measures required by the school in order to provide education to promote the child's learning successfully. If the assessment of the situation indicates that the student's support needs are particularly demanding, to the extent that it is impossible to provide education at the local school, education should be provided wherever it can be implemented for the benefit of the child.

As noted earlier, The Strategy for Special Needs Education has a steering group that proposes to give considerable attention to the early and timely provision of support and prevention to the child. A "stepped-up support" should be adopted as the primary form of support before a decision on special education is made. The stepped-up support would be used to bolster learning and growth and prevent the aggravation and escalation of problems relating to learning, social interaction or development. Stepped-up support involves welfare support, special services, and giving it early. As early childhood education is not overseen by the education sector, but by the social affairs and health sector, the steering group suggests that if early childhood education was administratively part of the education system, this would enable special-needs children to proceed flexibly and safely from early childhood to pre-primary and further to basic education. In relation to the education of students with emotional

or social difficulties, measures are taken to guarantee treatment and to shorten the queues to examinations and services. This involves more collaboration with the health care system.

Several projects of the Finnish National Board of Education aiming to prevent exclusion of students from educational opportunities were identified as good practices of special needs education. For example, the ALPO project develops regional educational and supporting services in special needs education. This project provides assistance in planning and provision of regional services, creating new forms of co-operation using the potential capacity of different operators. The SAIREKE project, as a resource centre, provides assistance and develops educational practices in hospitals (it involves collaboration between mainstream schools and hospitals). Finally, there are seven State owned special schools that also work as resource centres of competence and that enhance the role and national service system of state owned schools.

### *Learners and Teachers*

#### Learners

In Finland, differentiation, entailing different methods, tasks and materials for teaching is a pedagogy that can be used in mixed ability groups with the overall goal of benefiting each child. When a teacher is able to differentiate or personalise the learning process of a child, this has an effect of lowering numbers of children that need special education. As an example of differentiation, individual learning plans are widely used in Finland. These plans are tailored around the child's learning and personal needs. The learning plan, based on the local curriculum, can contribute to foster learning in children who need support in their studies, including immigrant students, for example. It can also be used as an educational tool if the goal is to support a gifted student.

As noted earlier, the provision of *general support* is one of the various forms of support available to enhance learning and development in all students. This kind of support includes guidance and counselling, student's welfare, cooperation between home and school, club activities, and the use of a learning plan, and remedial teaching. In particular, remedial teaching is provided for students who have temporarily fallen behind in their studies or who require special-needs education for other reasons. As noted by the FNBE, remedial teaching is a form of differentiation, and includes personal assignments, individual use of time and guidance and counselling. In cooperation with parents, before the student is judged to be

performing poorly, they must be given the opportunity to participate in remedial teaching. Remedial teaching will be provided either during the student's regular scheduled classes or outside regular classes. Students who need special needs assistance during basic education are given more individual guidance and counselling than other students in deciding how to continue their studies at the upper secondary level. In guiding these students, the guidance counsellor also co-operates with experts from other fields. General support and its various options are provided equally to all students, but schools also have the ability to focus support flexibly to meet the special-needs of individuals<sup>45</sup>. Support can also involve arrangements of integrated, partly integrated, special class settings, and modifications of the goals and contents to address in the classroom; changes in assessment and syllabi decisions can also be approached with flexibility.

Various forms of *special needs education* support are determined according to the special needs of a student which become evident during the course of his/her studies. A key factor is the early recognition of learning difficulties and problems at school that should then prompt an early provision of support. The FNBE underlines that support should be provided immediately if educational or student welfare professionals, or the student's parents, detect risk factors in the child's development and ability to learn. Indeed, disabilities, illnesses or handicaps can become obstacles to learning, as they impair the child's growth, development and ability to learn. Social or emotional problems can also result in the need for special needs education. In addition to remedial teaching, a student who has mild learning difficulties or behavioural problems has the right to receive special needs education alongside normal education. Generally, this assistance takes the shape of part-time special needs education provided by a special needs teacher who develops an individual learning plan for the child in close cooperation with parents.

When a student cannot participate in mainstream education due to a disability, illness, developmental retardation, an emotional disorder or some other similar condition, a decision to provide special needs education is made. All efforts are made to provide students with special needs services in their own school. A student who requires special needs education has the right to receive, free of charge, the interpretation and assistance services necessary for his or her participation in education, including the provision of special equipment. Decision-making regarding special needs education for a student involves close collaboration and

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<sup>45</sup> Finnish National Board of Education; <http://www.oph.fi/english/pageLast.asp?path=447,4699,4847,58365>

participation of the child's parents; an official decision is made based on psychological or medical or social grounds, and yet, it makes it possible to make a new decision or transfer to general schooling later on. The FNBE notes that, if possible, special needs education will be provided in conjunction with other education, or otherwise in a special needs education class, or another suitable location. This is always accompanied by an individual educational plan that defines the student's goals based on their own abilities, support arrangements and support services. The FNBE notes that if "it becomes clear that the goals laid down in basic education cannot be achieved in nine years due to the child's disabilities or illness, compulsory education will start one year before the normal prescribed starting age, and will last 11 years. Longer compulsory education gives the student a better chance of achieving the basic skills needed in society during basic education. If due to the student's severe handicap or illness, education cannot be provided according to subjects in line with the planned syllabus, the education must be provided by activity areas. The activity areas included in the curriculum are motor skills, social skills, cognitive skills, and skills in daily functions, as well as language and communication"<sup>46</sup>.

Finally, in relation to learners, the following facts were provided with interest during the workshop's presentation on inclusive education in Finland: 21.9 % of all the pupils in basic education have participated in arrangements of part time special education; girls have often problems in learning mathematics; boys have behavioural problems; individualization of syllabus in a single subject has become more common. In special needs education, there are more boys than girls. In basic education, in 2006, 7.7% pupils received special needs education: 3.9% in segregated special schools; 1.8 % in part time integration; 2.0% in full integration. From 2005 to 2006 the percentage increased in relation to the students in segregated settings; this is now pointed out as a challenge to address by educational policy and practices.

### Teachers

It was noted that in Finland there is now more information and skills among teachers to recognize the need of support in children. At the same time, when teachers are going through their pre-service education, the content of special needs education is modest. Teachers feel that they are lacking skills on how to address the special needs of children, they have the desire to do it better, but they do not know how. Teachers are learning in practice by working

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<sup>46</sup> Finnish National Board of Education; <http://www.oph.fi/english/pageLast.asp?path=447,4699,4847,58364>

in integration settings. The need for special needs comes from their practice; that is, from the teacher's need to better understand how to encounter these needs. Interestingly, it was noted during the workshop that the ability to deal with diversity is important to address in pre- and in-service teacher education programs; however, regarding teaching methods, it was noted that studies show that special needs education methods are not so different from mainstream ones.

It was recommended that universities should review the structures and content of teacher training to provide varied opportunities for student teachers to gain wide-ranging knowledge of, and get practical training in, the differentiation of education and special education.

### 3. Iceland<sup>47</sup>

#### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

In the case of Iceland, inclusive education is referred to in terms of Education for All. That is, there is equal opportunity for all to attend school and acquire education in accordance with their ability and needs. Schools must attend to the diverse abilities and needs of all students. Students and/or their parents decide on which school they attend; students in need of special support have the right to special provisions. The objectives of inclusive education are to prevent discrimination on the basis of origin, gender, residence, class, religion or handicap. All school activities shall take into account the varied personality, maturity, talent, ability and interests of students.

Along these lines, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture underlines that one of the basic tenets of educational effort is equality in education, which involves offering students suitable studies and instruction and giving them the opportunity to work on tasks of their own choosing. This does not necessarily mean the same solutions for everyone, but rather comparable and equivalent opportunities. The tasks undertaken should appeal equally to both boys and girls, rural and urban pupils, whether disabled or not, regardless of origin, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity<sup>48</sup>.

Encountering challenges of social inclusion, in the last decade a growing number of immigrant children have entered the Icelandic school system. There is a growing awareness among politicians and educators of the cultural and educational needs of immigrant children. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notes that this important field is still in its initial stages in Iceland.

#### *Public Policies*

The Icelandic government has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (1992), and adopted the Salamanca Declaration (Salamanca 1994) and the Education for All Declaration

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<sup>47</sup> This section was adapted from the country presentation, workshop notes and document titled “Inclusive Education and Schooling” presented by Mr. Sigurjón Myrdal of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland, in the Nordic Countries - Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> National Curriculum Guide, Compulsory School Act, 2005.

(Dakar 2000). Education for All is formally the guiding policy for the national education system in Iceland from early years to upper secondary education. This means addressing and responding to the learning needs of all pupils without treating or defining them in need of special support any different from other students. In accordance with this, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notes, there is no separate legislation for special education at any of the four levels of education in Iceland. However, there is separate legislation on the affairs of the handicapped (1992) that stipulates that all individuals with handicap (defined as mental retardation, psychiatric illness, physical disability, blindness and/or deafness as well as handicaps resulting from chronic illness and accidents) should be helped to live and function in a normal community along with other people. For this purpose, where a handicapped person's needs are not covered by general services within the fields of education, health and social services, special services, detailed in the law, should be provided.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notes that term special education is, however, nowhere to be found in the law. The ideology is that the compulsory 'basic school' shall be inclusive, catering for special education needs as well as other educational needs of its students. Since 1 August 1996, all compulsory schools, including special schools and units, have been run by local municipalities.

The most important legislation which affects the provision of special education is the law concerning compulsory education passed in 199<sup>49</sup>. The law stipulates ten years of compulsory schooling for children and adolescents between the ages of six and sixteen. One article of the law (article 37) specifies that children and adolescents who need special education because of specific learning difficulties or because they have emotional or social problems and/or are handicapped, have a right to special support in instruction in their studies. The main policy is that such instruction should take place in their local home school. If a student's parents or guardians, teachers or other specialists feel that the student is not receiving suitable instruction in its home school, the parents or guardians may apply for the student to attend a special school. The instruction can be on a one-to-one basis or take place in a group within or outside the mainstream classroom, in special departments within schools or in special schools.

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<sup>49</sup> The Compulsory School Act of 1995.

The following were noted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with importance as current policy challenges:

- The definition of diversity in education and the response to it by reconstructing the national curriculum;
- The focus on students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes
- Reforming the educational system to ensure coherence and continuity in “personalized education”.

Along the above challenges, the following groups were noted as being marginalized and/or excluded from education and in need of further attention by policy initiatives:

- Mentally and physically disabled students
- Immigrant pupils, especially in secondary schools
- Undefined drop-out students

Finally, it was noted that service for rural populations has been enhanced in recent years by new information and communication technologies.

#### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

In Iceland, the Education for All policy gives emphasis to the National Curriculum Guides for preschool (1999), compulsory school (2007) and upper secondary school (1999). The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture noted how these curriculum guidelines had never before been worked upon at the same time, however, this new approach assures conformity of goals for both levels of schooling. The Icelandic education system is aiming to prevent curricular fragmentation and to support continuity in the curriculum; there are also efforts focused on preventing academic bias in the curriculum and to further examining the role and composition of the Matriculation examination. In drawing up the National Curriculum Guides regarding the organisation of study, the production and selection of study materials, special effort was made to ensure that the opportunities for study accessible to all students are as equal as possible.

For example, a National Curriculum Guide for special units in upper secondary schools was published in the year 2000. The special units operating in upper secondary schools have special curriculum guidelines to meet the needs of disabled students. The programme offered by these units has three different levels depending on the needs of different students and lasts four years. The MOE highlights that it is the responsibility of each school to adapt their own instruction as best suits the needs of their students. Pupils are entitled to work on tasks suited to their academic ability and capacity (National Curriculum, p.22)

In Iceland Education is divided into four levels: 1) pre-school (leikskóli) up to 6 years of age; 2) compulsory (primary and lower secondary in a single structure – grunnskóli) students 6–16 years of age; 3) upper secondary (framhaldsskóli) students 16–20 years of age; and 4) higher education level (háskóli) from 20 years of age. Instruction in all four educational levels is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The majority of the schools are public and most of the few private schools receive support from public funds.

In regards to pre-school education, and efforts to strengthen coherence across the school system, a new Preschool Act was adopted in 1994, followed by the Compulsory School Act of 1995 and the Upper Secondary School Act of 1996. Thus, since 1994, pre-school is considered the first part of the education system. Educational objectives of pre-school are presented in the national curriculum and elaborated in school curricula in every pre-school. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture highlights that *playing* is considered a fundamental method of learning. Teacher education for pre-schools currently takes place in universities towards a B.Ed. degree. Along with other teacher education it is supposed to be extended soon towards a Masters degree.

Compulsory school classes are often characterised by mixed ability groups. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notes that at this level it is common to divide students into groups according to their ability in individual core subjects. Students can then choose between groups progressing at different speeds through the same course material in a particular subject. Those who are performing well can progress more quickly and those who find it difficult can proceed more slowly and receive more instruction. In a few schools, students who are committed and performing well in these courses can be allowed to take a specific credit unit in an upper secondary school. In this way there is co-operation between compulsory and upper secondary schools.

The lower secondary classes in compulsory schools emphasise special instruction to meet the needs of most students. Special instruction is carried out either as support for certain students or in the form of special departments. There is also increasing emphasis on educational and vocational counselling. Recent immigrants receive special instruction in Icelandic, both at the compulsory and upper secondary levels, in addition to some provision for instruction in their native language.

All young ones who have reached the age of 16 have the right to begin studying at the upper secondary level. According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, an increasing percentage of those who complete compulsory schooling continue their studies at the upper secondary level; during the last decade this increase has amounted from ca. 80% to ca. 93% of each year class. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notes that the traditional drop-out rate in upper secondary schools is of high concern, especially for the first year. At the same time, the number of upper secondary drop-outs has decreased gradually in recent years, but not fast enough according to the Ministry. The highest drop-out is among “rural boys” and “immigrants”.

In recent years several strategies have been sought to reduce the drop-out rate, among other things by strengthening educational counselling and by providing more varied course offerings. Also, several upper secondary schools offer full year remedial instruction. This instruction is especially intended as preparation for upper secondary school studies and for students who are not well prepared for enrolment in upper secondary school programmes. In mainstream classes at upper secondary schools, students with disabilities and immigrant students are assisted with their studies, by for example in sign language or Icelandic as a second language.

As noted earlier, immigration to Iceland is presenting a growing challenge to goals of inclusive education in the Icelandic school system. As there is a growing awareness in policymakers and educators of the cultural and educational needs of immigrant children, the national curricula emphasises the development of a school based “Welcome plan” and introductory courses. The emphasis is given to language and cultural skills. There is also a special section on Icelandic as a foreign language in the national curriculum. The largest immigrant populations in Iceland speak Polish, Serbo-Croatian and Thai languages.

## Special needs education and mainstream education

As noted earlier, there is no separate legislation for special education in relation to Iceland's education system; however, in the context of compulsory education, the role of special education is specified and regulated as part of the Compulsory School Act (1995). According to this, special education involves changes of educational aims, curricular content and teaching context and/or methods as compared with what other pupils of the same age are offered. Special education is organised on a short- or long-term basis depending on the needs of the child, possibly lasting his or her entire schooling.

In Iceland, children with disabilities are classified according to their primary handicap (deafness, blindness, physical handicap, mental and multiple handicap and socio-emotional/psychiatric problems). Within the larger schools and units, these students are grouped roughly by age, but in smaller schools they are taught together irrespective of age. Most students in special units located in mainstream schools are included for part of the time in regular classes and this gives variation to the sizes and composition of the groups during the day.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, there are six special units within local schools: three for autistic children, one for the blind, one for the motor impaired and one for children with mental handicap and multiple disabilities. All these units are located in mainstream schools and the students are included in regular classes part of the time. In some schools there are special units for children with some special education set up as a temporary solution. Students in these units are usually in close contact with the mainstream classes.

There are six segregated special schools that serve pupils with disabilities in the compulsory school age phase. These are: a school for deaf pupils, a school for children with psychiatric disabilities, two schools for adolescents with socio-emotional difficulties and two schools for children with mental handicap and multiple disabilities. None of the above-mentioned schools offers boarding facilities.

Special schools, like all other compulsory schools, were, by 1 August 1996, transferred from the state to the municipalities. The municipalities are obliged to ensure access to a special school or a special unit for those students whose disabilities make it impossible for them to

take advantage of educational facilities in their local school. The municipalities are also obliged to offer education for children who are in hospitals or are sick for a long period. In Iceland educational administrators with a supervisory role regarding schools were abolished in the 1990s providing all compulsory and upper secondary schools the autonomy to adopt methods to self-evaluate their internal communication, external relations, instructional and administrative activities.

### *Learners and Teachers*

In relation to this ICE sub-theme, based on the presentation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, it can be underlined that certain groups of learners are currently presenting challenges of inclusive education to the Icelandic education system. Students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes, are those with special needs (e.g. mentally and physically disable students); immigrant children and those students dropping out from upper secondary education (e.g. rural boys and immigrants). In relation to teachers and inclusive education, pedagogies supportive of a long-term and continuous “personalized education” centred on the child’s learning needs were highlighted as important to sustain.

#### 4. Norway<sup>50</sup>

##### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

Inclusive education in Norway is addressed within a developmental approach to the learning needs of all children youth and adults, especially those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. The Ministry of Education and Research makes reference to the principles of inclusive education included in the Declaration Statement of Salamanca, Spain 1994<sup>51</sup>. Traditionally inclusive education in Norway has been linked to the concept of *individually adapted education* (tilrettelagt opplæring). It is a right that has been applied for many years. The concept of adapted education gained considerable attention in the context of student movements of 1968 with interest in its application on the core curriculum and in principles of education. Adapted education focuses on building a “culture for learning”<sup>52</sup> in mainstream education in which teachers adapt and differentiate education tailored around the needs of learners.

In Norway, there are also educational provisions related to special education involving pre-school children, students and adults. These provisions maintain that special education shall be applied when more comprehensive adaptation is required than what can be arranged within the framework of the regular teaching.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education and Research notes that adapted education is often confused by teachers with special education and is therefore seen as a special pedagogical measure and not as part of mainstream education. Confusion arises when trying to separate adapted education from mainstream education, when, as noted by the Ministry, merging these two approaches should be taking place. That is, a holistic approach to education that aims to form the individual not only in a subject but also as a person. The individual is approached with the following five dimensions: the spiritual, the working, the

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<sup>50</sup> This section was adapted from the country presentation, workshop notes and document “Inclusive Education Norway”, presented by Mr. John Christian Christiansen, Ministry of Education and Research of Norway, presented in in the Nordic Countries - Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Spain, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> White paper on Curriculum Reform in Norway 2004, “Culture for learning”.

human being, the environmentally, the social human being. All these dimensions are embedded in an overarching curriculum of 1994.

Finally, in recent years inclusive education in the sense of including students from other language and cultural backgrounds has been at the focus of education in Norway. Surveys show that especially boys from minority cultures are at risk of being marginalised. At present, the drop-out rate from minority groups from upper secondary education is one of the main challenges faced by Norwegian education.

### *Public Policies*

In relation to policy supportive of inclusive education in Norway, it is important to note the Education Act<sup>53</sup> and the sections pertaining to Special Education, Adapted Education, the Core Curriculum, and the Quality Framework. It is in the Education Act (sections 5-1 to 5-7) that special education is mentioned as a right of pupils, adults and children under compulsory age. *Special education is given when more comprehensive adaptation is required than what can be arranged in mainstream tuition.* Pupils who either do not or are unable to benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition have the right to special education. The Education Act also states in Section 1-2 that “teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupils and apprentices. Emphasis shall be placed on creating satisfactory forms of co-operation between teachers and pupils, between apprentices and companies and, between the school and the home and between the school and the workplace. All persons associated with school or with training establishments shall make efforts to insure that pupils and apprentices are not injured or exposed to offensive words or deeds”.

More specifically, in national curricula which are also legal documents, adapted education is specifically mentioned in the Core Curriculum for primary and secondary education and in the so-called Quality framework (see below). The provisions on adapted education in these framework curricula provide the basis for the individual subject curricula. In the Core Curriculum under the Human Dimension of the working human being it is stated that the school must have room for everybody and teachers must therefore have an eye for each individual learner. The mode of teaching must not only be adapted to subject and content but to age and maturity, the individual learner and the mixed ability of the entire class. The pedagogical design must be flexible enough to allow the teacher to meet students’ differences

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<sup>53</sup> Amended June 17, 2005.

in ability and rhythm of development with kindness and ease. A good school and a good class should provide enough space and enough challenge for everyone to sharpen their wits and grow. But it must show particular concern for those who get stuck, struggle stubbornly and can lose courage.

In Part 2 of the overall of the Core Curricula, “The Quality Framework” summarizes and elaborates on the provisions in the education act and its regulations. The quality framework helps to clarify the responsibilities the school owners (in Norwegian public schools the local and county administration authorities) have in providing education pursuant to the legislation and regulations and the principles of human rights, and adapted to local and individual aptitudes, expectations and needs. The quality framework is an integral part of the foundation on which the quality of primary and secondary education and training can be further developed and on which the school and apprenticeship-training enterprise can be systematically assessed.

The Quality Framework is divided into two parts. The first part involves the Learning Poster, which presents 11 aims linking the Education Act and the Core Curriculum to aims for the school and apprenticeship training enterprise. These aims involve giving all pupils and apprentices/trainees equal opportunities to develop their abilities and talents individually and in cooperation with others<sup>54</sup>; stimulating the stamina, curiosity and desire of pupils and apprentices/trainees to learn<sup>55</sup>; stimulating pupils and apprentices/trainees to develop their own learning strategies and critical-thinking abilities<sup>56</sup>; stimulating pupils and apprentices/trainees in their personal development, in the development of identity and ethical, social and cultural competence, and in the ability to understand democracy and democratic participation<sup>57</sup>; facilitating pupil participation and enabling pupils and apprentices/trainees to make informed value choices and choices relating to their education and future professions/occupations<sup>58</sup>; *promoting adapted teaching and varied working methods*<sup>59</sup>; stimulating, using and further developing each teacher’s competence<sup>60</sup>; helping teachers and

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<sup>54</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act and Chapter 5, and the Core Curriculum.

<sup>55</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act, and the Core Curriculum.

<sup>56</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act, and the Core Curriculum.

<sup>57</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act, and the Core Curriculum.

<sup>58</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act, Chapter 22 of the Regulations and the Core Curriculum

<sup>59</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act and Chapter 5, and the Core Curriculum

<sup>60</sup> Chapter 10 of the Education Act

instructors to be seen as positive leaders and as role models for children and young people<sup>61</sup>; ensuring that the physical and psychosocial working and learning environments promote health, well-being and learning<sup>62</sup>; facilitating school cooperation with the home and ensuring the co-responsibilities of parents and guardians<sup>63</sup>; finally, ensuring that the local community is involved in education in a meaningful way<sup>64</sup>.

The second part of the Quality Framework involves seven main themes which address the following topics: developing social and cultural competences in students; increasing the motivation for learning as well as exploring learning strategies; enhancing pupil participation; providing adapted education and equal opportunities; developing the competence and roles of teachers and instructors; increasing the cooperation with the home; as well as enhancing the cooperation with the local community.

As an incentive to further understand and develop inclusive education in Norway, two prizes are given at the national level accompanied by strategies that promote and celebrate inclusive education. For example, The Queen Sonjas School Prize – Equality and Inclusion, has been given to two schools by queen Sonja since 2006: Apeltun school in Bergen and Aspervika Skole in Rogaland. The prize is 150.000 Nkr and a work of art. The prize applies both to compulsory school and upper secondary school. It is given on the basis of a jury who has considered applications from schools as fulfilling the following criteria: The school should - practice the rights for students' participation and influence; practice adapted education in a comprehensive way; oversee that students can experience security and belonging to the school; stress that each student receives a positive feedback ; present a holistic and long term plan to fulfil equality and inclusiveness involving students, parents, teachers and the principal.

The Benjamin Prize is given yearly to a school which works actively against racism and discrimination. The prize consists of Nkr. 100.000 and a bronze bust of 15 year old Benjamin Hermansen who fell victim to a racial and nazi motivated murder in 2001. The prize is given in connection with the international Remembrance Day for the Holocaust.

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<sup>61</sup> The Core Curriculum

<sup>62</sup> Chapter 9a of the Education Act

<sup>63</sup> Section 1-2 of the Education Act and section 3-2 of the Regulations

<sup>64</sup> The Education Act.

Also, at the national level a number of national centres have been established in a range of educational fields. In particular, two national centres promote inclusive education. The National Centre for Reading in Stavanger which has among its tasks to function nationally as a special pedagogical competence centre for reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia. There is also the NAFO, a national centre for multicultural education (Nasjonalt senter for flerkulturell opplæring) which was established in 2004 as a result of the Government's strategy "Equal Education in practice!" aiming to improve learning and to increase the involvement of cultural minorities in child-care centres, school and education.

Finally, STATPED is a national service system aimed at supporting those responsible for education at local levels in their development of an inclusive school for all, especially with regard to pupils who have special needs<sup>65</sup>.

#### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

Comprehensive and compulsory education encompasses children from 6-16 years old. Secondary education involves vocational and general education. Most of 14-16 year olds are in general secondary education, approximately 60%, while 40% are in vocational education. Pre-school was integrated into the education system only until recently.

As noted earlier, one of the main policy instruments to ensure quality education at the primary and secondary education levels in Norway is the Quality Framework. One of the main themes addressed by this framework pertains to adapted education and equal opportunities in education: *The school and the apprenticeship training enterprises shall promote adapted education and working methods*. According to this, when working on their school subjects all students should encounter challenges that they must strive to master and which they can master alone or with others. This also applies to students with special difficulties or particular abilities and talents in different areas. When students work together with adults or each other the diversity of abilities and talents may strengthen the community and the learning and development of the individual. At the same time, according to this framework, the diversity of students' backgrounds, aptitudes, interests and talents should be matched with a diversity of challenges in the education. Regardless of gender, age, social, geographical, cultural or language background, all students should have equally good opportunities to develop through

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<sup>65</sup> White paper on Curriculum Reform in Norway 2004 – "Culture for learning".

working with their subjects in an inclusive learning environment. Adapted teaching for each and every pupil is characterised by variation in the use of subject materials, ways of working and teaching aids, as well as variation in the structure and intensity of the education. Students have different points of departure, use different learning strategies and differ in their progress in relation to the nationally stipulated competence aims.

### Adapted Education and the Curriculum

According to the Ministry of Education, adapted education is an underlining principle in the over 300 individual subject curricula that exist, though it is not specifically mentioned. Adapted education entails choosing the right methodology for the individual student as subject curricula are free of methodology. These curricula describe a set of competences within main subject areas which individual pupils must reach. It is up to the individual teacher in co-operation with pupils and others to find adequate methodology for reaching the competency targets. In this way it allows students to reach the competences through a variety of methods adapted to the context, the amount of time available and to the student's needs and aptitudes.

It is important to underline however that the individual subject curricula are designed to allow for adapted education. The competences which pupils must attain are broad based. This means that the competences are not unnecessarily detailed and leave room for varying methods to reach the target and time for individually adapted education. There is in other words no curriculum overload. With very detailed curricula it is difficult to attain the targets through a variety of methods because of the time-factor.

The curricula for compulsory education do not describe competences at each year level but they do after level 4, 7 and 10. For the subjects Norwegian English, Knowledge of Christianity, Religion and the View of Life competences are described also for year 2. This allows the schools to reach the targets in more time than if the competences were defined for each year as in traditional curricula

The following are some examples of competency targets in some subjects in compulsory school. Targets are broad based and allow for considerable differentiation and adaptation. In many cases the pupil further specifies the competency target and content.

Subject	Main subject area	Level	Competency
Norwegian	Language and culture	After year 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>present important themes and expressions in significant contemporary texts and compare them with presentations in classical works from the Norwegian literary heritage, such as love and gender roles, hero and anti-hero, reality and fantasy, power and counter power, lies and truth, break-up and responsibility</li> </ul>
Norwegian	Written texts	After year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>read long translated and Norwegian fiction texts, children's literature and factual texts in the first-choice and second-choice Norwegian languages and express understanding and personal response</li> </ul>
Social studies	History	After year 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>present a historic event based on different ideologies</li> </ul>
Social studies	Sociology	After year 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide examples of how Norway participates in international cooperation through the UN and other organisations, including international cooperation between indigenous peoples</li> </ul>
Mathematics	Numbers and algebra	After year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore and describe structures and changes in simple geometric patterns and number patterns</li> </ul>
Christianity, religion and ethics	Ethics	After year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conduct a simple dialogue on conscience, ethical maxims and values</li> </ul>

For all the subjects in compulsory school and compulsory subjects in secondary school (Mathematics, Norwegian, English, Foreign languages, Science and Social studies) curricula are set by the ministry. Non-compulsory subjects in upper secondary school are set by the Directorate of Education.

### Special Education

In relation to special education, the teaching staff considers whether a pupil needs special education and notifies the head teacher of any such need. Before carrying out an expert

assessment and before making a decision to commence special education, the consent of the pupil or his/her parents are needed. As far as possible the special education that is provided is planned in cooperation with the pupil and the parents of the pupil and considerable emphasis is placed on their views.

When assessing what kind of tuition should be provided as part of special education, particular emphasis is placed on the student's developmental prospects. The content of the courses offered are such that the pupil receives adequate benefit from the tuition as a whole in relation to educational objectives that are realistic for the student. Students who receive special education have the same number of teaching hours as other students.

Before the municipality or the county authority takes a decision concerning special education, an expert assessment is made of the student's specific needs. This assessment determines whether the student needs special education, and what kind of tuition should be provided<sup>66</sup>. The expert assessment considers, for example, if and how the student benefits from ordinary tuition; the learning difficulties the pupil has and other special conditions of importance to tuition; realistic educational objectives for the student; whether it is possible to provide help for the student's difficulties within the ordinary educational provisions; what kind of tuition it is appropriate to give.

Special education applies also to adults (Education Act, section 5-2) and to children under compulsory school age (Education Act, section 5-7). A framework plan for the content and tasks of the kindergarten has been set by the Ministry of Education and Research and in which inclusiveness is an element.

At the same time, under its strategy of special education, Norway has three kinds of schools: for the blind, the deaf (sign language is part of mainstream education) and a special school outside of Oslo involving technical skills. The latter school provides "practical" education as an alternative to mainstream school settings; students learn, for example, how to build boats, etc.

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<sup>66</sup> Education Act, Section 5-3 and 5-4 on assessing the need and content of special education.

Supportive systems of special education are also available such as those involving educational and psychological counselling services. Each municipality and county authority provides an educational and psychological counselling service (PPT-tjeneste). These municipal services in can be organized in co-operation with other municipalities or with the county authority. These services assist the school in organizational development and development of expertise in order to improve the adaptation of tuition for students with special needs. The education and psychological counselling services ensure that expert assessments are prepared in the situations required by the Education Act. The overall aim is to strengthen adapted education and thereby reduce the need for special education.

### Inclusive Education and Minority Language Learners

As one of the main challenges for Norway regarding Adapted Education/Inclusive Education is minority language teaching. The municipalities have an obligation to provide special tuition for pupils from language minorities. In 2006 over 40.000 pupils in primary and secondary school representing over 120 languages received tuition in their mother tongue as they did not yet master the Norwegian language sufficiently to follow tuition in Norwegian. When they are able to comprehend Norwegian they are phased over from tuition in the minority language to the curriculum for basic Norwegian for minority language learners. The largest language groups in 2006 were Urdu, Somali, Arabic, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Albanian and Turkish. Also students with a different language background than Norwegian or Scandinavian languages can use their mother tongue as the subject requirement for foreign language in the educational programme for study specialization in upper secondary education. Examinations in around 60 languages are prepared each year for these pupils. The goal is to incorporate these students as soon as possible in the Norwegian mainstream schooling.

Norway also implements in parallel Sami education which is compulsory and goes all the way to upper secondary education<sup>67</sup>.

### *Learners and Teachers*

In the case of learners and Norway's approach to inclusive education in the form of adapted education, it is evident that students benefit from individual study plans tailored around their needs. A variety of teaching and learning methods are defined and adapted to the context, to

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<sup>67</sup> This parallel system is considered a political move that does not correspond to objectives of inclusion.

the amount of time available and to the pupil's needs and aptitudes as it is up to the individual teacher in co-operation with pupils and others to find adequate methodology for reaching competency targets.

In addition to the challenge of reaching and including minority language learners in mainstream education with adaptive measures, Norway's presentation also noted that as in other countries, bullying among students is a serious problem in Norway. The Benjamin Prize addressed earlier is given for work against bullying and race discrimination.

At the same time, in relation to teachers, the Ministry of Education and Research underlined how in practice teacher training programmes have often confused adapted education with special education; the former is understood as special pedagogical measure and not as part of mainstream education. The question has therefore been raised whether recently educated teachers have the necessary background for adapted education. The teacher training curriculum for student teachers clearly states that adapted teaching is an integrated part of all subjects in teacher training<sup>68</sup>. Some universities offer further education courses in pedagogy specialised in inclusive education.

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<sup>68</sup> White paper on Curriculum Reform in Norway 2004, "culture for learning".

## 5. Sweden<sup>69</sup>

### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

One of the approaches presented by Sweden to addresses inclusive education is that of equal an access to education by all children. As stated in the Swedish Education Act, 1 Chapter §2 “All children and young persons shall irrespective of gender, geographic residence and social and financial circumstances have equal access to education in the national system for children and young persons. The education shall be of equal standard within each type of school, wherever in the country it is provided”. The Education Act continues to detail that education should provide students with knowledge and skills and, in co-operation with the homes, promote their harmonious development into responsible human beings and members of the community. Particular attention is given to students who need special support.

The Ministry of Education and Research underlined how school activities are structured in accordance with fundamental democratic values. Each and every person active in the school system is expected to promote respect for the intrinsic value of every human being and of a shared environment. Persons active in the school system should in particular promote equality between the genders and actively counteract all types of insulting treatment such as bullying or racist behaviour<sup>70</sup>.

In parallel to mainstream education, the Swedish education system in accordance to the Education Act, also implements special education programs mainly for students with hearing/vision and speech disabilities, and offers special schools for mentally (intellectual) disabled children.

In response to different social groups, Sami schools are also provided to immigrant children in addition to regular ones. Swedish for immigrants is provided as well as compulsory education in the mother tongue of all learners.

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<sup>69</sup> Information in this section was adapted from the country presentation “The Swedish School System” (and Inclusive Education), presented by Ms. Barbro Eriksoon, Ministry of Education and Research; Nordic Countries - Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> The Education Act, states Law 1999:886.

### *Public Policies*

In Sweden, the overall national educational goals are set out by the Swedish Parliament and Government. The implementation of The Education Act; Curricula; Course syllabi for compulsory school; and program goals for upper secondary school are referred by the Ministry of Education as developing Sweden's education policy.

In relation to inclusive education, attention was given to the Education Act Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students (2006:67). This Act, also backing up the position of an Ombudsman as a representative for children and pupils equal treatment, emphasizes that no child and no student must be left without secure, clear and active protection. The purpose of the Act is to safeguard and promote the equal value of each individual on equal terms. The Act prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sexual orientation and disability. The Act also protects against degrading treatment, such as bullying.

### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The Education Act<sup>71</sup> indicates that the State provides education for children and young persons in the form of pre-school classes, compulsory comprehensive and upper secondary school and certain equivalent forms of school; that is, special schools (programs) principally for students with impaired hearing/vision and speech disabilities, schools for mentally (intellectual) disabled and Sami schools.

In more detail, the Swedish school system presents a pres-school level including three kinds of activities: preschool, family day care (age 1-5) and open preschool. Following, child care for school children is provided, with the continuation of family day care (ages 6-9), an out of school centre, and open out of school activities. Preschool class (ages 4-5 years old) and compulsory school (9 years) are organized by the municipality or independent schools (e.g. denominational schools) and catering to parent's choice. Regardless of the choice, the municipality pays for this education and parents pay the transportation. However, if the child has special needs, then the municipality pays for the transportation. As noted earlier, compulsory school is given in mother tongue of all learners. Swedish for immigrants is also provided as a support. Upper secondary school involves three years of schooling; it is free and

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<sup>71</sup> The Education Act, 1 Chapter §1.

offers seven programs. The Ministry of Education and Research remarked that there are very few drop outs from this level of education, which continues to a tertiary level of university, university college, working life and advanced vocational training, or supplementary studies as part of adult education. On the other hand, in a parallel system of six years, following the level of pre-school activities, children can also go to Sami school to then continue to upper secondary school for three years.

In parallel, the Swedish system also provides “special programs” for 10 years for children with deaf and hearing problems; this education is provided in 6 boarding schools in Sweden; the number of these schools has been decreasing moving the children to educational institutions closer to home or to mainstream schools. At the same time, these special schools are now also covering sight problems and other disabilities. At the pre-school level, all children are usually together regardless of special needs or differences. It is afterwards that parents choose where to place their child; that is, in a mainstream school or in a special school according to the recommendation of a specialist. There are also compulsory classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities that lead to upper secondary school for students with intellectual disabilities. In this case, the Ministry of Education and Research noted how parents choose to place their children in mainstream school versus the opinion of experts suggesting to place them in special classrooms or schools.

Education for adults with intellectual disabilities is also provided. Also at the adult level, municipal adult education encompasses basic education for adults, upper secondary education, and supplementary studies. The latter two can lead to a tertiary level of education involving university, university college, working life and advanced vocational training.

Apart from the types of schools provided by State, there may be schools provided by private physical or legal persons (independent schools). Municipalities are the entities responsible for pre-school class and compulsory comprehensive school. Municipalities and county councils are the entities responsible for upper secondary school<sup>72</sup>.

The Ministry of Education and Research noted that the Swedish school system is a goal-based system with a high degree of local responsibility. As presented above, the responsibility of

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<sup>72</sup> The Education Act states -Law 1997:1212.

education lies mainly with the municipalities and/or authorities responsible for independent schools. At the same time, Sweden presents a national inspection system to monitor schools. Education inspections of schools take place - before every six years, at present, every three years - to determine whether and how well school activities are functioning in relation to the regulations. Auditing takes place both at municipal and individual school levels. There are five regional offices of inspection in Göteborg, Linköping, Lund, Stockholm and Umeå.

In addition, the National Agency for Education draws up and takes decisions on the course syllabi for upper secondary school. This agency also decides on grading criteria for all types of Swedish schools, and provides general recommendations. The municipalities distribute resources and organize education such that students are able to achieve the national goals. Individual schools, preschools and out of school centres can then choose work methods suited to their local conditions. This work is followed up with annual Quality reports.

The MOE notes that there are 3 types of Curriculum. 1) Curriculum for Pre-school (Lpfö 98); 2) Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-school Class and the Out of school centre (Lpo 94); and the Curriculum for the Non-compulsory School System (Lpf 94).

### *Learners and Teachers*

The Ministry of Education and Research noted that in Sweden there is need of improving the capacity and skills of regular teachers and special needs education teachers as a way to better respond to the various needs of students. In relation to the diverse needs of learners, as relevant to the Ministerial presentation, it can be highlighted that Sweden provides the opportunity of compulsory school in mother tongue of all learners. Swedish for immigrants is also provided as a support. Learners with special education needs have the option of accessing education via mainstream or special education schooling. As noted earlier, it can be underlined that all learners in Sweden benefit through the active effort of the Swedish education system to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sexual orientation and disability in the activities as regulated by the Education Act.

## B. THEMATIC PRESENTATIONS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION<sup>73</sup>

The following section addresses the four ICE sub-themes - approaches, scope and content; public policies; systems, links and transitions; and learners and teachers - as identified in three thematic presentations related to inclusive education in the Nordic countries. Main points of the presentations are highlighted in the form of a discussion as a way to further enrich debates on the status of inclusive education in this region.

### *Approaches, Scope and Content*

During the presentations, and as stated by Professor Hannu Savolainen<sup>74</sup> from the University of Joensuu, inclusive education was addressed in terms of high quality education for all, maximizing academic and social development, and as involving the provision of support to facilitate effective education within the general education system. All children should benefit from a more inclusive education. Another approach to inclusive education as noted by Prof. Jarkko Hautamäki<sup>75</sup> from University of Helsinki and Ms. Liisa Heinämäki<sup>76</sup> from the Finnish Centre for Welfare and Health was also associated to special education and early support respectively. Overall, inclusive education was addressed as an ideal yet challenging system.

In his presentation, as an approach related to inclusive education, Prof. Hautamäki referred to special education as a mediating science creating tools, such as teaching, intervention, and rehabilitation (for example, using Braille, signing, behaviour modification), to overcome certain universal, objective, socio-historical constraints. He clarified that a model of the

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<sup>73</sup> The information in this section was adapted from the presentations under the workshop's session - Inspiring words and thoughts for session four by Finnish specialists and UNESCO EFA Flagship: Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki, "Conceptual Foundations of Special Education – sketches to a (personal) framework" presented at the International Symposium of Special Education: State of the Art in practical Work, Research and Education, University of Verona, Italy, May 2006"; Special Researcher Liisa Heinämäki, STAKES, Centre for Welfare and Health - "Early support: Inclusion in action in Finland" presented in the North European Seminar on Inclusive Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008; Professor Hannu Savolainen, University of Joensuu & UNESCO EFA Flagship, "Towards inclusive education – towards better teaching and learning, towards better schools and education systems"; presented in the North European Seminar on Inclusive Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>74</sup> Professor Hannu Savolainen, University of Joensuu & UNESCO EFA Flagship, "Towards inclusive education – towards better teaching and learning, towards better schools and education systems"; presented in the North European Seminar on Inclusive Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki, "Conceptual Foundations of Special Education – sketches to a (personal) framework" presented at the International Symposium of Special Education: State of the Art in practical Work, Research and Education, University of Verona, Italy, May 2006.

<sup>76</sup> Liisa Heinämäki, "Early support: Inclusion in action in Finland" presented in the North European Seminar on Inclusive Education, Helsinki 6-7 March, 2008.

conceptual foundations for special education derives from a socio-historical and developmental approach, where special education is given a mediating position between different types of constraints and various tools, the latter of which are used/invented to overcome the constraints. Thus, he observed that special education provides for the adaptation and mastery of human educational tools (teacher, textbook, curriculum, lesson, etc). This is done at the individual level by adapting the education that is provided at home, at school and at work; at the institutional level, education is adapted based on studies on how general developmental regularities and laws are achieved by particular means.

In her presentation, Ms. Liisa Heinamaki addressed inclusive education giving importance to the concept of early support/early intervention. She emphasized that this support should come as soon as possible in the context of preventive settings and methods. She noted that this early support approach focuses on changing attitudes, policy and service structure and classroom methods. She noted as well that in the field of education, the discussion focuses more on children who are not defined as having special needs.

### *Public Policies*

All presenters noted challenges to inclusive education, and made suggestions to improve public policy design and implementation. Pointing to challenges of inclusive education, the following questions were raised during the presentations. How to organize education for all children using (considering the advantages of) comprehensive vs. selective models of schooling? How to identify and situate within the education system children with disabilities/handicaps? The Finnish example of a comprehensive school reform towards inclusive education was not an easy process. “The comprehensive school reform was preceded by a hot debate of the benefits and dangers in teaching all students together”<sup>77</sup>. There were also questions with regards to the impact of inclusive education. How do poor/disabled students survive the mainstream system? Are the bright students allowed to fully develop? Among the issues that can impact inclusive education is the challenge of providing full educational access to all children, along with the lack of financial and other resources<sup>78</sup>. Ms. Heinämäki noted as well the dilemma in Finland of children being labelled as

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<sup>77</sup> Professor Hannu Savolainen, University of Joensuu & UNESCO EFA Flagship, “Towards inclusive education, towards better teaching and learning, towards better schools and education systems”, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

‘special’ in schools as a way for municipalities to receive extra financial support which should be channelled to such children.

In relation to these challenges, all three presenters put forth recommendations. Prof. Savolainen suggested that building effective support mechanisms into the new schools (esp. part-time special education) should be an essential part of reform projects. With regards to special education, Ms. Heinämäki states that the best implementation of inclusive education requires a clear understanding of special needs and special resources, and where early support can act as a bridge between basic education and special education. In her presentations, she examined the type of support that children may require in their educational development according to their various learning needs. She suggested four layers of support that should be readily available within the education system for each child. For example, she recommended Special Support, referring to special education expertise; Early Support, referring to stepped-up-support and prevention for early childhood development; Ground Expertise, referring to the concept of Sufficient Competence and knowledge; and finally Other Support Services, which include student welfare. She noted the importance of defining possibilities for support and prevention in everyday action, and in daily learning and basic education environments. Ms. Heinämäki also underlined the need for reflective, dialogical methods to increase collective thinking in society, and the crucial importance of knowledge and positive attitudes. She also emphasized the need to clarifying terms and definitions to describe preventive and early support working methods as a way to clearly address them at the conceptual level, at the teamwork level, at the organisation level and also at the system level. As a way to contextualize the implications of the authority of special education, Prof. Hautamäki noted three main functions in this regard, namely, the right to define the educational problem, diagnosing with respectable tools, and providing effective intervention.

### *Systems, Links and Transitions*

In the context of psycho-educational solutions to meet or match students’ variations, Prof. Hautamäki noted how there are several historical layers compiled into modern education system, leaving their dynamic marks within schooling institutions. These include separate schooling for handicapped children, for example blind children, as well as variation within general schooling, especially in terms of tracking, streaming, curriculum and standard resources (time and financial allocations), and the provision of part-time special or support

education. According to Prof. Hautamäki, an inclusive education system faces three types of constraints: ‘plasticity’ (universal constraints, like blindness), ‘teachability’ (objective constraints, like difficulties in teaching geometry), and ‘educability’ (socio-historical constraints, like gender and socio-economic status). He proposed medical and diagnostic innovations, pedagogical, didactic and socio-technical innovations, and social innovations related to socialization and cultural transmission as ways to address the constraints of plasticity, ‘teachability’ and ‘educability’, respectively.

The presentations also noted the difficulty in modelling an ideal inclusive school and curriculum, high learning expectations and curriculum considering the extent of diversity in children’s learning needs as well as a changing social diversity. Prof. Hautamäki noted how the challenge arises as to how to “tackle the diversity of pupils at the same time that we are compelled to solve the demands for particular knowledge and competences. The required level of knowledge and competence is generally defined via curriculum goals. If the level of knowledge required is too high, say in primary education, does this mean that all learners should attain this high level? If so, we have an educational problem; if not, we have a moral problem”<sup>79</sup>. Ideally, it was suggested that removing the marking system would create a more inclusive environment for all learners. For example, Nordic countries are facing an increasing immigration<sup>80</sup> and it is essential that schools know how to adapt to this diversity. Ideally, there should be a competence to address diverse needs equally. Ms. Heinämäki noted that society needs to learn from differences as well. She emphasized that there should be some collective understanding of supporting a child, including in terms of daily activities, quality basic pedagogy, and a common view of prevention, knowledge and skills. In his presentation, Prof. Hautamäki examined some measures and school models that have been proposed to address learners’ various needs. For example, some propose to have a selection and tracking for high ability students and/or high SES, and financial resources for a defined population tracked for special needs education and for whom the education level has been lowered. However, these solutions are morally problematic, according to Prof. Hautamäki. In Finland, comprehensive schools aim to balance psychosocial educational and didactic solutions

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<sup>79</sup> Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki, “Conceptual Foundations of Special Education – sketches to a (personal) framework”, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> In PISA 2003, immigrants composed to 2.2 % of the Finnish sample as quoted in Professor Hannu Savolainen, University of Joensuu & UNESCO EFA Flagship, “Towards inclusive education, towards better teaching and learning, towards better schools and education systems” with reference to “Where immigrant students succeed - A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003”, OECD 2006.

involving basic and special support as early as possible. The key, according to Prof. Hautamäki, is a combination of all of these options. It remains that the “common tasks and goals of education and instruction are also the tasks and goals for the special education of a difficult child. The general laws which govern the development of the child and his/her education are the same for the development and education of a difficult child. The only significant difference is that these general tasks are resolved by special means, and the general goals of development are achieved by particular ways”<sup>81</sup>.

Particularly in terms of pedagogy, the notion of ‘delivering for every child’ was essential in all presentations. Prof. Hautamäki stated in his presentation the need to address “how the school adapts itself to the special needs of the pupils by selecting or developing new forms of activity (the institutional component), and how the teachers adapt themselves to the individual needs of the developing person (the intentional component)”. Prof. Savolainen highlighted the effective and quick intervention system in Finland to support individuals, for example support provided by a special education teacher that is de-stigmatized (many students receive this support, including good students). He further identified the criteria for a quality inclusive education system and put forth recommendations to achieve the goal of ‘delivering for every child’. A comparison of 25 world's education systems, including an analysis of top ten performers in the PISA 2003 study explored what the good systems have in common and what tools they use to improve student performance. The study<sup>82</sup> found that three things matter most: encouraging the right people to become teachers; developing them into effective instructors; and ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child. Prof. Savolainen suggested that the Nordic countries should set high expectations for what students should achieve, target resources to the students that need them the most, and monitor and intervene at the school level. He also noted that top systems recognized that they cannot improve what they do not measure. Thus, monitoring and intervening is also needed at the student level.

Finally, with regards to primary and secondary, and tertiary education and students’ transition across these levels, Prof. Hautamäki observed that an emergent type of ‘need’ is created by

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<sup>81</sup> Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki, “Conceptual Foundations of Special Education – sketches to a (personal) framework”, 2006, reference to Vygotsky, L.S., *Principal propositions of the plan for pedagogical research in the field of difficult children*.

<sup>82</sup> McKinsey & Company, “How the world’s best-performing school system come out on top”, Sept 2007. [http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/ukireland/publications/pdf/Education\\_report.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/ukireland/publications/pdf/Education_report.pdf)

defining and demanding a higher minimum level of competence for entrance into further (2nd, 3rd) education. In this case, the lowest quartile, the lowest performing 10% - 20% - up to 50% will be facing problems. Additionally, the importance of early support was also highlighted, by Ms. Heinämäki, as a way to improve transition from intervention to prevention, from the individual to society - where the individual is understood in context - and from integration to inclusion. The base of early support is a good ground expertise. Many children do need something more than 'the usual', but not yet so very special. Early support is also a model for preventive ways to organise pedagogical environments and working habits.

### *Learners and Teachers*

With regards to teachers, all presenters acknowledged the importance of teaching and support for teaching for successful inclusive education settings. According to Prof. Savolainen, the teacher effect on a child's learning is much more influential than the effect of most other interventions. With reference to a study by Forness (2001)<sup>83</sup>, Prof. Savolainen followed to note the more or less effective methods of teaching and learning support that teachers can use. Some of the least effective interventions were psycholinguistic training, reducing class size, modality instruction, and special class placement. Moderate effectiveness was found with early intervention, cognitive behaviour modification, psychotherapy, and peer tutoring. Finally, some of the most successful interventions were mnemonic strategies, reading comprehension strategies, behaviour modification, and direct instruction. Prof. Savolainen also noted that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers". In accordance, the top performing education systems have more elective mechanisms for selecting people from teacher training, or even selecting teachers before they start their teacher training. For example, top performing systems paid starting salaries that were at or above OECD average (relative to per capita). However, most top performing systems spent less on education than the OECD average. Moreover, teacher training was also highlighted as key to improving the outcome of learners. Prof. Savolainen noted four major approaches to teacher training: building practical skills during the initial teacher training; placing coaches in schools to support teachers; selecting and developing effective instructional leaders; and enabling teachers to learn from each other. In her presentation, Ms. Heinämäki also focused on how to develop teachers' skills. She emphasized the need for reflection and dialogue to

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<sup>83</sup> Forness, S. (2001) Special education and related services: what have we learned from meta-analysis. *Exceptionality* 9, 185-197.

develop educators' awareness and skills. For this, she suggested a training method called Developing Model, which gives the educators an instrument to assess and develops their classroom culture and cooperation in working teams. This method is based on increasing dialogue in society and starting a reflective, relational learning process in working teams.

With regards to learners, Prof. Savolainen observed that when an education system is made to respond to the learning needs of all children it is likely to be more effective, and learners are likely to increase their performance, especially if they have a 'good' teacher. A study<sup>84</sup> showed that an effective teacher over three years has a substantive effect on students' performance, increasing it by 50 percentile points, over those learners who had least effective teachers. On another note, Prof. Hautamäki discussed the notion of competence with regards to learners. "Competence is a demonstrated acquisition and further development of knowledge and skills, whether intellectual, physical, socio-emotional, or a combination of them"<sup>85</sup>. In this context, "dysfunction refers to the manifestation of difficulties on the part of the developing person in maintaining control, and their integration of behaviour across situations"<sup>86</sup>. He emphasized the importance of enhancing learners' competence through teaching, intervention or rehabilitation, while at the same time increasing dysfunction prevention.

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<sup>84</sup> Effects of reducing class size or heterogeneity of class minimal compared to the teacher effect. C.F. McKinsey & Company, Sept 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki, "Conceptual Foundations of Special Education – sketches to a (personal) framework", 2006.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

## **V. CONCLUSION - REGIONAL ROAD MAP: NORDIC COUNTRIES**

As a conclusion, the following section presents as one of the main outcomes of the Nordic countries seminar on Inclusive Education the final regional statement that participants agreed upon at the end of the event. This document, as road map was preceded by country presentations and group work deliberations involving a mixed representation of the participating Nordic countries. Participants collectively decided on a road map that synthesizes the region's evolving approach to inclusive education, marking policy initiatives and priority issues to be pursued by Nordic nations with respect to inclusive education in the region.

### *Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content*

- The scope of inclusive education in Nordic countries was referred to as not facing the same obstacles and/or challenges of other regions. For example, the degree of social and economic segregation found in other countries resulting in social exclusion is not a main challenge to be addressed by inclusive education in the Nordic region.
- Nordic countries refer to three stages in the development of equitable educational opportunities: access to education; access to quality education; access to success in education. The conception and challenges of inclusive education in the Nordic region are situated in the third stage: finding ways to continue the development of successful learning in ALL students within a good learning environment and with individual support. Therefore, inclusive education is about everyone being in school and providing good quality education and learning that enables everyone to develop his/her full potential.
- At the same time, with the purpose of sharing a common language, it is necessary to further clarify the concept of inclusive education. Attention should be given to the risk of addressing the concept only at a rhetorical level. The term of inclusive education should be clarified in relation to integration and special needs education. Refining the concept of inclusive education also requires clarifying if there are two separate processes occurring when speaking of inclusive education and individualised education. It is also important to distinguish between individualisation and personalisation; participants identified that in the region, countries are moving towards

personalisation which means taking into account the uniqueness and the potential of each child within social context.

- Nordic countries agree that early intervention in the education of a child is an essential component of inclusive education; therefore, refining the concept and practice of early intervention in some countries can be useful as a key step to promote inclusion.
- It is important to increase the awareness about inclusive education throughout the education system, especially at the school level. In parallel, the concept of inclusive education and diversity should also be understood and shared with parents and the community as they may be reticent or afraid to support it. Parents sometimes lose sight of the fact that the school is a reflection of society and they think only about their child instead of doing it always in social context.
- The following groups were identified as deserving more attention in terms of inclusive education: children who are unable to attend school especially because of social-emotional problems regardless of their socio-economic background; ethnic groups (e.g. Roma, adolescent immigrants); students that do not have the skills to continue with education after comprehensive school, especially boys who are dropping out from upper-secondary education. Participants remarked how schools should not only give attention to these groups, but also involve in the education process the local community and family of these students in order to sustain any reform or support within the school. With emphasis, the community's approach and involvement in children's education was referred to as one of the main strengths of Nordic countries.

#### *Inclusive Education: Public Policies*

- Participants brought attention to the importance of having policy proposals that address both students' welfare and education through inter- sectoral approaches. At the school level, multi-professional cooperation for the benefit of students should be further developed. In addition, inter-sectoral cooperation and resource people at the level of the municipality who support schools and teachers and parents are also helpful.

- Nordic countries vary in their national and municipal budgetary allocations for special and temporary support provided to children during their school years. Nevertheless, in all Nordic countries municipalities have autonomous power on how to allocate and use such resources. In all countries there is a need to develop more flexible forms of support provided temporarily or continuously to the student through all school years. Such support can vary in form including methodologies of differentiation, flexible study groups, remedial teaching, part-time special needs teaching etc.
- State and governmental policies should also allocate resources to support teachers and schools to address the challenges of inclusive education. For example, there is a need at national and municipal levels, to further invest in multi-professional cooperation and resource centres. In parallel, policies involving teacher education should focus on increasing teachers' skills on how to work with different kind of children and on how to support them individually.
- Laws and relevant policies of inclusive education need to remain flexible to become applicable to local school education contexts.
- There should be unified policy objectives linking university teacher education programs, school curricula and teaching practices throughout all education levels. It is also important to guarantee systematic in-service training for all teachers.
- Dilemma: To what extent do we leave the roadmap proposals to be developed by the schools and/or included in the national guidelines? In the optimal case national policy supports the autonomous solutions of schools and different ways to implement inclusive policies.

*Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions*

- Both the school and society need to be ready for inclusion.
- Nordic countries agree in keeping the approach of a broad based, school based curriculum. The idea of inclusion is built into policy making and a national curriculum

that is not loaded with instructions on how to do things; rather the curriculum focuses on general competences, and does not detail what to teach.

- The curriculum should not be overloaded with details in addition to the hindrance of time inflexibility.
- The curriculum could be used more freely with more flexible timetables that allow for the development of the full potential of students. It is the case in Finland, especially in the lower grade levels.
- Time is a challenge especially in the upper levels of schooling (i.e. upper secondary).
- There is need to allocate more time to physically exercise as part of the holistic development of a child. Nordic countries are therefore finding ways to involve physical activities throughout the school day.
- Institutional, curricular, structural flexibility is a key factor in positive learning processes, in addition to having flexibility in the use of time, space and resources.
- Flexibility and independence in the way schools work is positively reflected in the students' learning abilities. The school and classroom levels, with positive and supportive teacher-student interaction and active student-student cooperation, are the most important in education.
- Pedagogical leadership: It is important to support municipalities and schools in relation to their provision of pedagogical leadership. Such support should not be a controlling or monitoring one, but rather implying a supportive interaction.
- The Nordic experience shows that the comprehensive school model allows for flexibility; it is this type of school what makes the difference in education processes and outcomes; it is not the curriculum that defines the school model but the school model that allows for flexibility in the curriculum.

- In order to have cohesive transitions in the curriculum across grade levels it is often an advantage to have elementary and secondary schools in one building; smaller building units work well in order to support students individually.
- The same ethos of comprehensive schools needs to be incorporated into upper secondary education; the competencies of all students need to be strengthened to make the transition.
- Cooperation inside and outside the school should be continued and enhanced; especially, among teachers, and with special educators; a multi-professional cooperation, especially in 7-9 grades.
- The relationship between the school and the community should be a close one when it comes, among other, to the design of the school curriculum.
- In Nordic countries, values (e.g. democracy, self-development, learning how to live together, tolerance, participation, self-responsibility) are translated into curriculum and teaching practices. The following aspects are always present at the classroom level – partnership, equality and community.
- Participants agreed on the benefit of a decentralized evaluation of education systems with the objective of assessing and supporting the system as a whole and with less emphasis on specific inspections coming from the national level. For example, in Finland there are no national inspections of schools and in Iceland educational administrators with a supervisory role regarding schools were abolished in the 1990s providing all compulsory and upper secondary schools the autonomy to adopt methods to self-evaluate their internal communication, external relations, instructional and administrative activities. Denmark introduced quality reports as part of a municipal reform in 2007 with the goal of helping municipalities govern schools.
- Nordic countries have developed well functioning systems for immigrant education but still it is very challenging to address the growing cultural diversity (e.g. language and religion) in the learning processes of students. Proposals to address this diversity

could involve special teaching methods and support activities that consider the different learning and cultural differences in students; bilingual education; education in mother tongue (e.g. Finland, Norway and Sweden)

### *Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers*

- The teaching profession is highly valued in Nordic countries and their societies.
- An education system based on the trust given to the teacher is an essential aspect (only Sweden has a national inspection system to monitor schools)
- In Nordic countries, the relationship between teachers and students is not a formal hierarchical one. The relationship is characterised by warm, friendly and respectful interaction between teachers and students.
- Emphasis should be given to an ongoing cooperation between parents and teachers.
- Attention must be given to the different salaries and training backgrounds between classroom and subject teachers as this may encourage divisions between them hindering collaboration at the school level.
- Teachers need continued support to meet the various needs of students. A lack of qualified teachers and special needs class teachers was identified in certain countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, it varies as well by geographical area (urban, rural). A good knowledge base and skills about how to teach children with different needs is important to develop in teacher education programs; in this way, teachers will be able to rely on their own competencies in an inclusive way.
- In response to the question of how to increase and support the knowledge and skills of teachers in inclusive education the following was discussed: The role of assistant teachers was explored. Assistant teachers do not provide a continuous support; they vary in their teaching quality. Also, assistance in the classroom should not be excluding, counter-productive, or stigmatizing. Thus, more attention should be given to whom and how the assistance is organized and provided. Provision of assistance is

related also to how the whole community works. Assistance should be provided as a whole, in the context of a community understanding that everyone receives help. In Finland, the part-time special needs education is a good example of successful and non-stigmatising form of support.

- Team teaching could be useful as a support for inclusive education yet without excluding the possibility of having the support of assistance. Compared to the past, teachers are now more willing to teach in teams.
- Implement more creative ways of enhancing the learning environments in the classroom, for both academic and social purposes (e.g. peer tutoring, assistance and team teaching). The question remained: Should this be a school-based initiative or to what point should this be a homogenous measure applied to all schools?
- The continuation of education after compulsory education is a common challenge. There are still too many drop outs at the upper secondary level even though the drop-out figures are quite low in international comparison. Support systems are needed to follow up drop outs.
- Participants proposed to address drop outs at the upper secondary level by improving student guidance and counselling activities and by improving students' competencies as they move from comprehensive school to upper secondary; also learning barriers such as family problems must be addressed.
- Nordic countries encourage and develop student participation as a key element of an inclusive society. There is a high development of student participation beyond student councils; it is embedded in all the educational school processes.
- Creative teaching methods that aim to meet and develop the different needs of students were suggested. For example, participants discussed "differentiation" similarly understood as "personalisation" or "individualisation" as a pedagogical approach which involves using with students different methods, by giving different tasks, and using different kind of materials. This kind of pedagogy results in a differentiated

pedagogy used in mixed ability groups in which all students benefit from it. If a teacher is able to “differentiate” or “personalise” or “individualise” learning situations from the very beginning, it will result in lowering numbers in special education.

- Supporting students’ all-round personal development is a key aspect of an inclusive curriculum.
- The role of individual study plans was widely discussed as part of the roadmap. Individual study plans were positively considered in the region as a good way to approach the variety in students’ needs and interests. This involves a negotiation with the student and parents about methods, goals and commitments. It helps the student to become aware of his/her own learning process. For example, Denmark and Finland have introduced individual study plans to evaluate the student and to communicate with parents.
- Setting up individual study plans should not suppose lowering what is expected from each student or hinder the possibility of following their learning process. Individual study plans should be applicable to include students with special needs as well as gifted ones; individual study plans would be able to address the variance in students’ learning needs. Individual study plans could also be supported by pedagogical methodologies involving student group work.
- Student assessment should be based on the individual growth rate. Nordic countries could be more creative on how to measure the progress of learning. How to evaluate individual progress, in a way that is supportive during schooling and that at the end of compulsory education provides some criteria that helps teachers see the individual achievement compared to the national level of achievement. The National Core Curriculum 2004 in Finland presents this kind of evaluation system.
- It is important to give feedback to students, teachers, parents, in order to better understand different strategies of learning during children’s schooling. At the same time, teachers’ education must incorporate that approach.

- Attention should be given to help students in their transitions between education levels, involving parents in the process.
- Instead of increasing and using a diagnostic approach to address the differences among children, evaluation of pedagogies and learning environments should be useful to seek extra support and additional funding to attend to the different learning needs of children.
- To the date, about 25% of students in Finland are defined as needing some kind of additional support during their compulsory education; the numbers are lower in other Nordic countries. Most of this support is given by students own class teacher or subject teacher and by special needs teacher (so called part time special needs education that is usually given simultaneously during the regular lesson). Support is organised in strong collaboration and interaction with parents.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### Nordic Countries - Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education of the 48th Session of the ICE/ Helsinki 6.-7.3.2008

#### PARTICIPANTS

1	UNESCO	Belacazar, Carolina	UNESCO/IBE/ Geneva
2		Operti, Renato	UNESCO/IBE/ Geneva
3		Van der Brule, Jill	UNESCO/Paris
4	EFA/Flagship	Arponen, Johanna	FINIDA
5		Eklind, Kenneth	UNESCO/Paris
6		Kuorelahti, Matti	University of Jyväskylä
7		Savolainen, Hannu	University of Joensuu
8		Valentini, Andrea	UNESCO/Paris
9	Denmark	Jørgensen, Anna Sofie Weigaard	Ministry of Education
10	Island	Mýrdal, Sigurjón	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland
11	Norway	Christiansen, John Christian	Utdanningsdirektoratet
12		Fossum, Laila	Utdanningsdirektoratet
13	Sweden	Eriksson, Barbro	Skolverket
14	Finland	Elo, Pekka	Finnish National Board of Education
15		Halinen, Irmeli	Finnish National Board of Education
16		Hautamäki, Jarkko	University of Helsinki
17		Heinämäki, Liisa	National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES)
18		Holopainen, Pirkko	Finnish National Board of Education
19		Järvinen, Ritva	Finnish National Board of Education
20		Jääskeläinen, Liisa	Finnish National Board of Education
21		Koivula, Pirjo	Finnish National Board of Education
22		Korhonen, Osmo	Syve
23		Kuukka, Katri	Helsinki Education Department
24		Mattila, Paula	Finnish National Board of Education
25		Metso, Tuija	Finnish Parents' Association
26		Oker-Blom, Gun	Finnish National Board of Education
27		Pohjonen, Petri	Finnish National Board of Education
28		Semi, Ritva	Trade Union of Education in Finland
29		Tanttu, Kimmo	Syve

APPENDIX 2

**Workshop's Programme**  
**Nordic Countries - Preparatory Activity of the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the International**  
**Conference on Education**  
Helsinki, Finland 6 – 7 March 2008

<b>Tuesday 4 March 2008</b>	
During the whole day	Participants' Arrival
<b>Wednesday 5 March 2008</b>	
During the whole day	Participants' Arrival Optional School visits( meeting point at the lobby/ Hotel Seurahuone 8.45)
19:00 -	Get together – evening / Hotel Seurahuone ( meeting point the lobby )
<b>Thursday 6 March 2008</b>	
8:30	Common walk/ tramride to the Helsinki Congress Paasitorni, Paasivuorenkatu 5A
09:00 – 09:30	Registration, coffee/ breakfast
09:30 – 10:45	Welcome Addresses  Workshop and participants' introduction  Opening presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive Education as a main strategy to attain EFA goals by Mr. Renato Operti, Coordinator of the Curricular Capacity Building Programme, IBE-UNESCO, Geneva.</li> </ul>
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15 – 12:45	Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Right to Education for All: Global Perspectives in Inclusive Education by Mrs. Jill Van den Brule, Inclusive Education, Division for the promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS), UNESCO Paris</li> <li>• An inter-regional perspective on Inclusive Education: outcomes from other Regional Workshops by Mr. Renato Operti, Coordinator of the Curricular Capacity Building Programme, IBE-UNESCO, Geneva.</li> </ul>

12:45 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	<b>SESSION 1</b> - Presentations of the National Reports on Inclusive Education (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denmark</li> <li>• Finland</li> <li>• Åland</li> </ul>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 – 17:30	<b>SESSION 2</b> - Presentations of the National Reports on Inclusive Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweden</li> <li>• Island</li> <li>• Norway</li> </ul>
18 – 19.30	Reception organized by Helsinki city
<b>Friday 6</b>	
09.15 – 10:30	<b>SESSION 3</b> - Inspiring words and thoughts for the session 4 by Finnish specialists and Unesco EFA Flagship. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Jarkko Hautamäki, University of Helsinki</li> <li>• Special Researcher Liisa Heinämäki, Stakes</li> <li>• Professor Hannu Savolainen, University of Joensuu &amp; Unesco EFA Flagship</li> </ul>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:45	<p><b>SESSION 4</b> - Topics to be raised in the International Conference of Education (ICE) 2008 and development of the Nordic regional roadmap on inclusive education</p> <p>Parallel Work in groups on four themes: Work in groups on each of the four themes of the workshops of the International Conference of education 2008. Each group works on themes and identifies, discusses and contributes to the elaboration of the Nordic regional agenda on Inclusive Education (roadmap).</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content (to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education);</li> <li>(ii) Inclusive Education: Public Policies (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education);</li> <li>(iii) Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions (to create education systems which offer opportunities for life-long learning); and</li> <li>(iv) Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners’ diverse expectations and needs).</li> </ul>
12:45 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	<p><b>SESSION 5</b> - Presentations of the documents elaborated by the groups and design of a working plan to elaborate a regional agenda on Inclusive Education (roadmap).</p>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee
15:30 – 17:00	<p><b>SESSION 6</b> - Development of the Nordic COP and Closing Addresses</p>