



Stakeholders together adapting ideas to readjust
local systems to promote inclusive education

CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

What is inclusion about?

Ana Paula Silva

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WHAT IS INCLUSION ABOUT?

Inclusion is a right for all children and youngster, not only in Education, in schools, but in all domains of the society. It is not a question of an updated fashion in Education. Acknowledging Inclusion in Education means to acknowledge also “Education for All” as a right consigned in the Universal Human Rights Declaration (UN, 1948), in the Children’s Rights Convention (UN, 1959) and in Convention on Rights of the Person with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

Nowadays, this is part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 of the United Nations, based on four pillars: PEOPLE, PLANET, PEACE, and PROSPERITY. The goal related with Education is the 4th goal, which plays an essential role and aims to ensure an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017).

In the European context, social inclusion has been in the heart of EU cooperation in the educational field. Since the Lisbon Strategy (2000), when education was first recognised as an important source for developing a socially inclusive EU, various documents and initiatives have been adopted at the EU level aiming to realise this important and ambitious goal: the most recent being the Council conclusions on establishing a *European Education Area* by 2025, and stressing the value of good quality, inclusive education from childhood onwards in laying the groundwork for social cohesion, social mobility, and an equitable society.

In education, inclusion and equity mean a big challenge at all levels and layers of the national systems. When facing inclusion, it means to have as main goal, for a whole educational system, the fulfilment of needs’ diversity of all students, promoting learning and participating. This is a complex challenge, that needs a systemic approach (Hall & Hord, 2015; Viennet & Pont, 2017) to build more *inclusive* and *participative* schools, in a more *comprehensive* and *democratic* environment.

Facing inclusion in schools means to face a big range of problems that include social problems (early dropping out of students, for instance), the integration of cultural minorities or refugees, poverty, but also, students with special learning needs and disabilities.

This way of reasoning implies a big shift on the way usually education and schools are faced, mainly regarding schools as cultural and learning space for all, with more inclusive, participated, and democratic methodologies, based on developing competences of learning of knowing, of doing, of behaving, including the development of “soft skills” (communication and social relationship skills), critical thinking and of living together. Inclusive schools provide the resources and the help to each student to go as far as he/she can go in their development and autonomy process as a person, as a citizen.

Inclusive schools are more oriented towards the processes of learning, where cognitive learning skills are as important as artistic, social and communication skills. All members of the school community, including parents and stakeholders, can participate and share their knowledge and their culture. All can learn from one another. And all members of the school community (youngsters included) are responsible for the success of the other one.

In line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), though from a different perspective, by stressing that achieving more equity in education is not only a social imperative, but also a way to use resources more efficiently and to increase the supply of knowledge and skills that fuel economic growth and promote social cohesion (Schleicher, 2018).

According to Schleicher (2018), the quality of a country's education is an indicator of the wealth that countries will produce in the future. If all students can demonstrate that they have basic skills, the

immediate or long-term benefits for the economy will also increase. Putting a high value on education can be a pre-requisite for building a first-class educational system and a successful economy. If all their students were equipped with at least basic skills, even high-income and middle-income countries would see an economic gain equivalent to almost five times the value of their current GDP. For this group of countries, the future average GDP would be 3.5% higher than without this improvement, which is close to the amount they currently spend on school education. In other words, by 2030, the economic gains accumulated only with the elimination of extreme low performance would be greater than the expenditure on primary and secondary education for all students.

The biggest source of inequality in wages is skills inequality. Inequality of skills means inequality in society. Our parents taught us that we must study hard to get a good job and a decent salary – and that advice has never been truer than it is today. The consequences of skills inequality within and between countries go far beyond social and economic concerns. Policy makers are realising that such an inequality in education provides fertile ground for radicalism (Schleicher, 2018). In today's interconnected world, a country's future may depend as much on the quality of education beyond its borders as on the quality of education offered in its territory.

Increasing investment in basic skills - increasing the quality of basic education for all - not only results in greater productivity and employability among adults, but also ensures that the benefits of economic growth are shared more equally among the population. A more inclusive and possible growth thanks to the universal acquisition of basic skills, has a tremendous potential to ensure that the benefits of economic development are shared more evenly among citizens.

Investing in the high quality of basic education - and in the training of adults and educational programmes for those who need to update their basic skills - is an efficient way to improve a country's talent pool, and a way to conquer a society with more social and economical inclusion. In addition, tackling wage inequality requires a package of public policies that involve education and training, the labour market and tax and income transfer systems.

What wise parents want for their children is what the government should want for all children. Children from wealthy families will find doors open to a successful life. But children from poor families have only one chance in life: a good school that gives them the opportunity to develop their potential. Those who miss this boat, rarely catch up, as opportunities for education in life tend to reiterate the results of the first years of formal education. Providing access to high-quality education and care in the early years of formal education is generally considered to be the most effective way of levelling the playing field in education and in life.

Equity is only partially associated with socioeconomic status and the need to spend more resources on the most disadvantaged children. Awareness that different individuals learn differently and have different needs is equally important. The greatest difficulty of the 20th century was the right to be equal. The 21st century is the right to be different. The school could use the voice and experience of students in many ways - both those who have done well and those who have failed – to guide changes in the relevance and organisation of schooling (Schleicher, 2018).