STAIRS MOOC - Book of Modules

Learn to do more - How to foster policy-related learning to achieve meaningful change towards inclusive education?

MODULE 2

Module 2: Schools and Educational Practitioners: Making Schools Inclusive Environments

Introduction

This module provides opportunities for the learner to examine the central role schools and teachers play in responding to and addressing educational marginalisation and exclusion. Throughout the module, the learner will be introduced to a range of macro and micro initiatives that have attempted to make schools more inclusive environments for all children. The learner will be able identify good practice in the field of education and become aware of the daily challenges and problems faced by schools and educational practitioners to ensure all children are provided with the best start in life and included in the life of the school. The module will enable the learner to appreciate the role schools and educational practitioners play in fostering inclusion. It will examine the importance of collaborative practice and multi-agency engagement within and between schools and the key role dedicated school leaders and teachers play in enabling this multi-agency engagement. The module will focus on a range of good practice initiatives from both Portugal and Ireland. The module will focus on the various approaches that schools take when working with the entire school community to ensure positive outcomes for all children. It will examine initiatives that are State led interventions such as DEIS and TEIP, regional level interventions such as the Limerick DEIS literacy initiative and school led interventions such as the Home School Community Liaison scheme and the Bridge back to School initiative. It will examine school engagement with marginalised and vulnerable children and parents and will illustrate through the STAIRS study visit videos, the multifaceted and interconnected roles educational practitioners occupy from teacher to counsellor, social worker, advisor, and advocate etc. The commitment of the school to the community will be explored and particularly, how schools are an important physical, social, cultural, emotional, and educational structure within the community. There will be a particular emphasis on how schools work to create positive and inclusive learning environments for all children.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

1 Cognitive: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

- Evaluate the role schools and educational practitioners play in fostering educational inclusion.
- Reflect critically on the importance of multi- and inter-agency responses to marginalisation and exclusion at the school level.

- Interrogate how schools and practitioners work effectively with vulnerable children and parents.
- Evaluate the multifaceted role school leaders play in fostering positive learning environment through social, personal and educational engagement with parents and children.

2 Affective: Attitude and Values

- Value the importance of partnership working at the school level.
- Appreciate the key role innovative and committed school leaders, teachers and other school personnel play to the school community they serve.
- Value the role of continual professional development and sharing expertise across schools.
- Appreciate the key competencies underpinning successful practitioner work with vulnerable, excluded and marginalised communities.

Module Content and Lessons

There are seven lessons in this module, and they will examine a variety of issues related to inclusion in education. To complete this module, the learner required to:
- Listen to the introductory video for each lesson. This video will explain the key focus and main points of each lesson.

- Read the lesson explanation below.

- Listen to the selected videos which will be in sequence.

- Read the associated PowerPoint which accompany the video.

- Read the required readings which are included as links in each lesson.

- Complete the assessment

Lesson One: Introduction: Inclusive Education for All – Power of the School

This lesson will introduce you to the module content and the module learning outcomes. It will briefly summaries the key objectives of the remaining lessons that are included in this module. The main aims of this module are to explore the various ways the school community work together to ensure all children have the best possible outcome. It will explore how the development and nurturing of authentic relationships between the school (teachers and school head etc.), children and their family can lead to positive learning outcomes for children. It will demonstrate how schools can help break the cycle of educational exclusion and marginalization. It will emphasize t the importance of positive school, family and community relationships, and a culture of high expectations for all children. The lessons will highlight the importance of developing a willingness to work together for the benefit of children and their family and how schools can come together to address change. It will also highlight the importance of having highly educated teachers who are knowledgeable and skilled, but who are also willing to learn new ways of approaching issues. It will also highlight the importance of having positive dispositions towards minority children and their family and other marginalised children and parents. As you are progressing through the lessons, you will begin to appreciate the importance of developing a culture where the child is placed at the centre of the work of the school. Each initiative presented in this module demonstrates a very strong child-centered ethic of care at the core of its work.

The module will explore macro level initiatives that are supported and funded at State level and how these initiatives are then implemented at school level. It will also examine some regional level initiatives that were established to address a specific regional issue and the implementation process at individual school level. It will also focus on local partnership that have developed between schools and between schools and a regional teacher education college. The module will examine some of the challenges presented to schools and school practitioners working in vulnerable and marginalised areas and how the school personnel (school principal, teachers etc.) work towards creating a positive, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all children. It will identify initiatives that are specifically targeted at addressing exclusion and marginalization. It will examine the role communities of practice play within and between schools in adapting and responding to educational and social challenges. It will focus on the multi-faceted roles that effective school leaders and teachers play from teacher, counsellor, social worker, advocate to mentor etc. It will explore the transformative potential of schools, teachers, and other school personnel in the lives of vulnerable children and their parents.

The module will stress the importance of multi-agency approaches and responses to educational exclusion. The module will also emphasize the importance of developing a whole school approach to tackling social and educational exclusion. Effectively, the module will demonstrate how the school can be an interactive system that responds quickly, adapts and changes to student and community

needs. The module will explore how schools provides support and interact with the community and how in turn, the school receives support from the community. It will identify the process of building a learning community around the school and how relationships between different stakeholders can be sustained through collaboration and multi-agency cooperation which ultimately enhances the lives of all children, leading to social inclusion and positive school transitions for all children. This module will place schools and educational practitioners at the centre of the discussion concerning inclusion of all children in society. It will examine several good practice examples of inclusive initiative in Ireland and Portugal.

Watch Video: Introduction to lesson one
We begin this journey by exploring the concept of inclusive education and why it matters in education. We will focus on the journey of both Portugal and Ireland, their similarities, and differences. We will also look at one Portuguese school and how it promotes an inclusive environment.

Watch Video (4:09 - 42:00): **Inclusive Education: building the airplane while flying**. In this video Professor David Rodrigues, Profession of Special Education, Technical University of Lisbon provides an overview of concept of inclusive education and the development of inclusive education in Portugal. Professor Rodrigues talks about inclusion as not just human right but as a multiplier right. Inclusion means the right to education, the right to diversity, the right to a fair environment. He explains that Inclusion is a tool that helps to develop other human rights. Inclusion is not just a matter of resources, but is a value that each person, each community, each State and each country has. Inclusion highlights both difference and equality. Difference is a value that we can celebrate, but when difference leads to inequality it creates exclusion and is a societal problem. We are all born different, but when those difference are used to treat people inequitably that is a problem and inclusion is a way of addressing those inequalities. He argues that inclusion is a whole school approach, each student matters and matters equally. Inclusion is for all children and includes gender, socio-economic, special needs etc. He outlines the three Bs in Inclusion:
1. To be – to reach and develop our potential in education;
2. To belong – to belong to a class and to belong and that you feel you belong, and this should be an objective of all schools and that the school community (teachers, children etc.,) feel that they belong to that school;
3. To become – to become more than what was expected and develop your potential.

He takes us through the development of inclusion in Portugal, which has been quite dramatic since 1974. The first piece of legislation that dealt with inclusion in Portugal occurred in 1997, three years after the UNESCO Salamanca Statement. The most recent 2018 Inclusive Law talks about inclusion and not special needs, which is a big change in focus. This essentially means there is one school for

all, and children are educated together. However, within each school are multidisciplinary teams working to make sure all children receive an inclusive education. They have a triangle approach to inclusion, which this is like the Irish system. The range of supports depend on the level of support the child requires. They moved entirely from special schools to resource centres for inclusion, which now give support to children in mainstream schools. The support in located in the school. This ensures the system is completely inclusive. The focus is on support and not in diagnosis. Currently, 98% of children with disabilities are educated in mainstream education and they have approximately 7,800 special education teachers who support teachers to become inclusive teachers. Building the airplane while flying means that we must build inclusion while inclusion is happening. He suggests five ideas:

1. It is important to develop inclusive public education policies that improved equality for all. One of the principles was full-time education for all children within public schools and support for teacher education to promote inclusive education.
2. Differentiation and flexibility of curriculum to promote inclusion; 25% of the curriculum is at the discretion of the school.
3. Teacher education – both Initial and continual so that we have knowledgeable and skilled practitioners that are reflective practitioners.
4. Collaboration – to work together to promote an inclusive environment. Inclusive education will not happen otherwise.
5. The need for innovation – inclusion is the fundamental value of education and should be transmitted to all the school.

Portuguese classrooms are now very heterogeneous, however children with SEN will have a differentiative plan within the mainstream classroom, which may include different assessments etc. Schools can create special groups where children or young people can have specialized curriculum. Until the 9th grade all students are in regular classroom groups and follow the general curriculum. After 9th grade, and particularly if children have failed exams, schools may generate a special group with a special alternative curriculum pathway (for instance, art, sport, or VET curriculum/programme) for these children. However, these alternative curriculum programmes must be approved by the educational ministry, and then by the child and their family. It is not compulsory but once a programme has been approved, schools can invite children to participate in the programme. Most teachers were not educated in an inclusive school themselves, so they may perceive inclusive education as a big job. However, it is important to try and once you start to monitor change and student progress, this can provide confidence to continue. We must build the airplane while flying – mobilize teachers for projects and see and watch and see how it works and specially to see how the student progresses in education. Schools must be proactive, and society will become inclusive – society will change when education is transformative. Relative autonomy of the schools can make a different in society. He argues that the only way to be a teacher is to have emotion and be enthusiastic – to have soul.

Watch Video: Escola Secundária Ferreira Dias (secondary school), Portugal.
This video provides an example of an inclusive approach taken by a secondary school that works with children from a range of

challenging and disadvantaged backgrounds. The school is in a disadvantaged area of Lisbon. The video documents the way they approach inclusion. The school places the child at the centre of their educational philosophy. For instance, they develop courses around the child's interests and potential. Using a differentiated pedagogy, the school-works with the child to provide a quality educational experience. The school has a range of supports such as learning supports, educational psychology etc. that work with the teachers to provide the best outcomes for the children.

Watch Video (beginning – 14:57): [A Way to Address Inclusive Education in Ireland](#) and **Read** the associated [PowerPoint](#)**.** In this video, Dr Margaret Egan, Lecturer of Special Education at Mary Immaculate College provides an overview of the journey of Inclusive Education in both Ireland and Europe. Like Portugal, Ireland currently operates a triangle approach to inclusion and the teachers are expected to differentiate their lessons etc. based on the children's needs and to monitor progress. She argues that Inclusive Education is education, and we have to educate our teachers to have specialized knowledge to be able to differentiate and provide an inclusive education environment in mainstream education. She provides an historical overview of inclusion that was primarily a medical model which focused on the medical diagnosis of need. She traces the road to inclusion in Ireland and how language evolved. Traditionally, children with special needs were sent away to be educated in special schools and thus segregated from the general population. Following independence from the UK in 1921, there was an emphasis on renewing our Gaelic language and culture and inclusion was not a priority. In 1971 Ireland developed a new curriculum which was child-centered and one that emphasized individual difference and collaborative learning. She argues in the video that we are still trying to achieve that inclusive curriculum that was born in 1971. In 1983 The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland Report acknowledged that "no child was ineducable' but almost ten years after that parents had to fight legal cases to obtain education for their children with special needs – this occurred in the 1990s. In comparison to Portugal, Ireland has special schools and special classes within mainstream schools. The Salamanca Statement came at a good time for Ireland as the Report of the Special Education Review Committee had just published its report in 1993 and framed its legislation. Parents were important in changing how education approached inclusion in Ireland.

Read:
- Banks, J. & Smyth (2021) "We respect them, and they respect us: the value of interpersonal relationship in enhancing student engagement", Education Sciences, Vol 11. No. 634:1-14.

(This paper examines two Irish education initiatives that are examined in the STAIRS project (Youthreach and School Completion Project) with the authors focusing on the development of positive relationships between staff and students to sustain student engagement in education.)
- Lynch K. (2019) Inequality in Education – What Educators can and cannot change,

https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/bitstream/10197/10679/2/Inequality%20in%20Ed.%20%28Sage%20book%202019%20%29%20Final%20draft%20text%20with%20abstract.pdf

- Council of Europe (2014) Education for Change, Change for Education, Council of Europe: Strasburg, https://rm.coe.int/168046b2d8
- Information on Portuguese Inclusive Laws; https://allmeansall.org.au/portugals-new-school-inclusion-law-small-country-taking-big-steps-spirit-means/
- Information on Portuguese Special Education Needs Provision within mainstream education https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-53_en
- Information on Irish Special Education Needs Provision within mainstream education https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-31_en

Assessment – Lesson One

Please complete the following questions
1. Reflect on what 'Building the airplane while flying means with regard to inclusion in education?

2. What are Professor David Rodrigues five key suggestions for achieving inclusion?
    a. Suggestion 1_____
    b. Suggestion 2_____
    c. Suggestion 3_____
    d. Suggestion 4 _____
    e. Suggestion 5_____

3. Reflecting on your own country or regional context and the principles outlined in the Salamanca Statement
    (a)   On a scale of 1 to 10, how inclusive is your education system
    (b)   Provide a rationale for your rating

2 Lesson Two: Macro Level State Support and School Response to Educational Disadvantage, Example One

Both lesson two and three focus on macro level state initiatives that are supported and funded at State level. Both lessons will explore how these initiatives are then implemented at school level. Lesson two will specifically investigate the Irish DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) initiative in Ireland and lesson three will focus on the Portuguese Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (TEIP). Research suggests that initiatives designed to address social exclusion, marginalisation and disadvantage must approach solutions from several fronts. Bottom-up approaches that we will examiner later in this module are successful because the stakeholders can respond quickly to an issue and can mobilise local (and existing) partnerships. Bottom-up approaches can also respond flexibly as stakeholders have local geographical knowledge, can target specific groups, schools etc. and in most cases, they have a long history of working together. However, long term funding can be an issue and it can be difficult to make real structural changes that eliminates marginalisation in the longer term. This is where broader top-down macro-State initiatives can make a difference because funding can be ringfenced for initiatives, initiatives can be packaged together in a larger programme and more in-depth evaluations can be carried out. Macro state level initiatives can effect systematic change, for instance curricular change at primary level, teacher education and teacher professionalism through the provision of additional mentoring, training, or additional qualifications. Macro education initiatives can also be linked to, and influence other areas of the state and society, for instance social welfare and children's rights. Every society required both bottom-up and top-down initiatives. However, top-down initiatives that build in flexibility which enable local areas and regions and schools to have some autonomies have been shown to display longer term positive change. DEIS and TEIP programmes have been successful because there is in-built flexibility for schools to respond in different ways.

Watch Video: Introduction to lesson two

Irish DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) initiative has been in place in Ireland since 2005. DEIS is the Irish word for chance – giving every child an equal chance. DEIS is centrally State funded educational programme but has a bottom-up approach to targeting and addressing educational disadvantage at a local level. It is based on the premise that disadvantage is spatially concentrated and therefore schools located in disadvantaged areas receive ring-fenced funding to enable them to tackle literacy and numeracy difficulties etc. DEIS is a significant programme which supports a broad range of initiatives such as the Home School Community Liaison scheme, School Completion Project and School meals programme etc. Some of these initiatives have been in place for over twenty years. Schools in Ireland

DEIS is based on targeted supports that attempt to deliver equality of opportunity in schools from pre-school to post-primary education

(three to eighteen years). DEIS is built upon several previous initiatives such as Giving Children an Even Break and Breaking the Cycle and the Disadvantaged Area scheme and is part of a long history of partnership intervention in Ireland. DEIS is based on long term action plans and there is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, parental engagement and building capacity of school leaders and teachers. DEIS is also built upon a strong foundation of research, evaluation, and feedback to schools. DEIS schools are expected to undertake school self-evaluation and must submit every three years a DEIS plan for the school. Effective school and classroom planning is a key element of DEIS and is one of the five goals. DEIS is based on five main goals:

1. To implement a more robust and responsive Assessment Framework for identification of schools and effective resource allocation (for instance, targeting schools with the most severe disadvantage).

2. To improve the learning experience and outcomes of children in DEIS schools.

3. To improve the capacity of school leaders and teachers to engage, plan and deploy resources to their best advantage.

4. To support and foster best practice in schools through inter-agency collaboration.

5. To support the work of schools by providing the research, information, evaluation, and feedback to achieve the goals of the DEIS Plan.

Pre-school to post-primary schools are either DEIS or non-DEIS schools. To qualify for the range of DEIS supports available to schools, schools must be given designated DEIS status. The designation status is based on Central Statistics Office small area population statistics (deprivation index) and DES pupil data (children's postal address etc.). There are three designations:
- DEIS Band 1 schools (most severely disadvantaged schools, and generally are inner-city schools)
- DEIS Band 2 schools
- DEIS rural schools.

There are a whole range of supports (smaller teacher: pupil ratio, special education teachers, literacy, and numeracy initiatives etc.) that are targeted at DEIS schools. The range of supports and schools' designation status are reviewed periodically by the Department of Education Inspectorate section who carry out evaluations. Schools are expected to cooperate with these DEIS evaluations, which are quite thorough, and schools must produce a three-year DEIS plan detailing literacy and numeracy targets, home school community links and attendance. The school must detail how they will bring up their literacy and numeracy scores, attendance etc. Developing and fostering partnership with the family and the community, is a central element of DEIS schools. DEIS schools are monitored on an annual

basis and Inspectorate evaluations of each individual school are carried out approximately every five years. The Inspectorate produce an evaluation report which is made available on the school and DES website. However, schools receive a lot of support in return. Within DEIS schools there is a big emphasis on supports and multi-agency work within the school. Agencies such as NEPS (National Educational Psychologist Service), National Welfare Board (board responsible for school attendance), TUSLA (The Child and Family Agency), Speech and Language Therapy etc. work with individual children (and family) within the school setting.

DEIS schools have designated staffing levels and smaller classes, and there is also a big emphasis on continual professional development (CPD) for staff. This CPD is delivered at Local Education Centres by PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) etc. While DEIS is centrally funded by the government (like education in general) and schools are expected to implement DES initiatives, schools have the flexibility to engage in non-DES initiatives which support the overall DEIS programme. This allows schools to work with local agencies (voluntary and statutory) to address a local need. For instance, some DEIS schools in Limerick are involved in the Bedford Row project, which is aimed at families and children who have a family member in prison. This flexibility allows schools to be innovative and creative in their work with parents and children. Some DEIS schools may work with a HEI (Higher Education Institute) such as a university or an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) College to deliver bespoke CPD or workshops for children (LEGO education, school placement etc.). All schools have access to DES supported and funded (school support programme) programmes such as: Home School Community Liaison Service (operating since 1990), School meals programme (free lunches and breakfast), schoolbooks Grant scheme, School Completion Programme (operating since 2002).

The DEIS initiative supports the philosophy that the school is part of the community and consequently there is a strong emphasis on building partnership with parents and a multi and interagency approach to helping families and communities. Some schools provide parenting classes, cookery, building child-parent relationships, shared reading project and story sack projects at Christmas time. DEIS schools are also closely involved with local support agencies (social services, housing, and homeless charities etc.). School heads also work hard to ensure staff have positive attitudes towards children (in terms of having high expectations) and encourage staff to participate in CPD that enhances their own teaching and learning strategies.

In terms of the DEIS initiative – the main focus is on literacy and numeracy initiative and most of these are DES funded (all DEIS schools are expected to implement these initiatives) such as:
- First Steps/ Reading recovery
- Reading for fun (family reading initiative with Home School Community Laision (HSCL) and Speech and Language Therapist (STL)
- Maths Recovery

- Ready, Set, Go Maths
- Incredible Years
- Friends for Life (delivered by HSCL coordinators and teachers)

There are other programmes that support the DEIS initiative but that are not mandatory. Some available in Limerick city include:
- LEGO Education and LEGO after school clubs
- English as an Additional Language CPD
- Learning Hub Limerick
- EDNIP (Integration of migrant communities) project
- Roots of Empathy

Over the last few years, there has been a significant shift towards in-school supports (agencies come into the school). Schools would work closely with the Education Welfare Service (this is a service under TUSLA – Child & Family agency) to encourage school attendance etc. Other partnerships would include Focus Ireland – who work with children who are 'homeless' (living in accommodation hubs) and also Sophia Housing (voluntary agency), Doras Luimní (migrant families), Barnardos' Homemarker Family Support. Schools would also work with the local Education and Training Boards to provide classes (cookery etc.) with parents. DEIS schools in Limerick also work with the City Council through the Social Intervention Fund (funding made available for school supports).

DEIS schools have a high concentration of children with special education challenges and Traveller children. Children who arrive in Ireland via refugee status and asylum seekers would generally be placed in DEIS schools. The multiagency response to children in DEIS schools is now based on a One Child, One Team, and One Plan approach. For instance, in 2009 four education services were integrated under the responsibility of National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)– School Completion Project, Home School Community Liaison Scheme, Visiting teacher for Travellers and the Education Welfare Service. The NEWB practice model known as *One Child, One Team, One Plan* was designed to facilitate the integrated working of NEWB services with the school and the home. There was a recognition that some individual children and their families require additional support around school attendance, participation and/or retention. The model is designed to provide a systematic and consistent approach to working with a child and/or their family, incorporating a continuum of intervention ranging from the universal through the targeted to the intensive. In 2011 NEWB was transferred to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under TUSLA (Child & Family Agency). There are two significant initiatives under DEIS programme: Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Project. The HCSL scheme will be explored in more detail in Lesson 4.

School Completion Project: It was established in 2002 in designated areas of disadvantaged and was integrated into DEIS in 2005. The focus is on the young person (4-18yrs) most at risk of dropping out of school. The programme is organized in terms of clusters of schools and currently 124 School Completion Project (SCP) clusters. The cluster comprise of local primary and post-primary DEIS and some non-DEIS (where children may transfer from DEIS primary to non-DEIS post-primary etc.). It operates under Local Management Committees or Education Training Boards (ETBs). Schools, families, state, and community agencies work together to ensure children make successful transitions and remain in formal education. The SCP project coordinator co-ordinates in-school and after-school, and holiday supports for children, and out of school supports for those who have left mainstream school. They work with and liaise closely with schools, community Gardaí (police), and charitable organisations such as: St Vincent de Paul, Health Service Executive, TUSLA and the HSCL coordinator etc. It is essentially a Holistic School Engagement Programme, specifically designed to keep children interested and engaged in education. There is a big emphasis on building relationships with children, so that they feel safe to speak to the SCP project coordinator about issue that are bothering them. Activities that the SCP project coordinator organizes include breakfast and lunch clubs, homework clubs, attendance tracking and programmes to facilitate transition from primary to post-primary, counselling, and self-esteem classes with young people, Drama, Music & Art classes. They also facilitate the DES funded incredible years' programme (focus is on positive behavior), holiday camps and Easter programmes (Literacy etc.).

Evaluation of the DEIS programme have highlighted positive results. Children's numeracy and literacy scores have improved relative to the general school population, more children are making successful transitions from primary to post-primary and from post-primary to higher education and school attendance has improved. However, there are still significant gaps between DEIS and Non-DEIS schools and there is evident of segregation, where children from migrant families and children with special education needs are more likely to attend DEIS schools.

Watch Video: [How to promote equality of opportunity in DEIS](#) and **[Q & A How to promote equality of opportunity in DEIS](#)**. **Read** the [associated PowerPoint](#). In this video both school heads (Tracie Tobin & Tiernan O'Neill) outline the DEIS programme and how it operates within their school. They discuss the range of initiatives that take place as part of DEIS and importance of working in partnership with parents and families. They highlight the multifaceted role that the DEIS school and teachers play in the lives of children and families, particularly in embedding a positive orientation towards education, improving school attendance and help parents to developing a positive orientation towards education and in the process help their children succeed in education.

Listen to Soundcloud: The power of DEIS. This SoundCloud features a DEIS Band 1 School in Limerick City, Corpus Christi School. Here school personnel and parents talk about the school and the school community. They outline some of the challenges but the holistic

approach the school takes with each child. The video documents the range of supports made available to the children and the wider community and the need for additional local supports and flexibility that respond to the specific needs of the school community. The video illustrates that Corpus Christi is much more than a primary school and how it reaches out to the community. It emphasizes the need to for education to place the child and their family at the centre, to have high aspirations for all children and to move beyond an academic narrative of education to one that embraces the social and emotional development and needs both children and parents. https://soundcloud.com/user-636987406/radio-documentary-of-the-year-the-power-of-deis-claire-odowd

Watch Video: This video provides an overview of DEIS planning via a DEIS school and the role of self-evaluation: http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/primary/stories-schools/videos/

Read:
- Information about DEIS is found here: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/ This section documents the range of supports made available to DEIS Band 1 and DEIS Band 2 Schools.
- DEIS Plan: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/#deis-plan-2017
- Information about Home School Community Liaison Scheme: https://www.tusla.ie/tess/hscl/
- Information about the School Completion Project: https://www.tusla.ie/tess/scp/
- Smyth, E. (2018) Education and the DEIS Programme, Education Matters Year Book 2017-2018. This provides an overview of the origins of DEIS and process of DEIS school designation. She also summaries some of the key education trends comparing DEIS and Non-DEIS schools. (Link here)

Assessment - Lesson Two

1. Reflecting on the video and reading material
   - (A)   what are the key strengths of the DEIS programme?
   - (B)   What are the key challenges for the DEIS programme
2. Compare the DEIS programme to a similar programme in your country/region – outline the key similarities and differences
3. What new ideas have you gained from completing this lesson

3 ### Lesson Three: Macro Level State Support and School Response to Educational Disadvantage, Example Two

This lesson will focus on the Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP) which has adopted a territorial approach to addressing exclusion and early school leavers and improving outcomes amongst marginalised and disadvantaged children. In this respect, it is quite like the Irish DEIS programme which is also focused on geographical exclusion and disadvantage. TEIP promotes educational inclusion in schools located in disadvantaged areas of Portugal. The TEIP programme was launched in 1996 (TEIP1) and a second version of the programme was implemented from 2006 (TEIP3), with the aims of reducing the Early School Leaving (ESL) and promoting educational success. In 2012, a third version started, which built upon the successes of TEIP2 but in this current version it also focuses on the provision of quality education and quality learning outcomes for children from marginalised communities. It also promoted school autonomy to foster improved teaching and learning, which again shows similarities with DEIS. However, TEIP is based on school clusters, whereas each DEIS school is treated as an individual school. Currently, the programme includes 137 school clusters which represent 17% of all Portuguese school clusters. TEIP schools develop specific improvement plans based on an agreement between the school and school authorities, on a range of measures, targets, evaluation, and additional resources. School clusters evaluate progress annually and the results are fed into a national evaluation. The selection of schools to benefit from TEIP is based on social and economic indicators of the geographical areas where the schools are located. Additionally, the Social Action Programme is orientated towards poorer families with children and parents apply to the programme at the beginning of the school year. The student receives additional support such as free school means, IT support (especially important during the COVID pandemic), free transport and other social amenities. Children with SEN can also apply to the Social Action Programme to avail of additional therapies.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson 3
Portugal is a country where historically education was highly centralized and has moved towards greater decentralization and autonomy at the school cluster level. School clusters developed in early 2000s, following reorganisation based on poor results of PISA2000. This led to the introduction of the concept of clusters, where schools (preschool to secondary) are brought together in a single school cluster. School clusters can diversity their suite of programmes and courses to cater for the specific needs of the school population. Currently, school clusters have full autonomy to manage up to 25% of their curriculum content/time. Since 2019 schools can apply for innovation grants from the Education administration for additional funds to increase the 25% to focus on specific innovative projects. These projects are monitored by the Education administration. There are currently 60 projects that have been funded under this innovation plan. This autonomy allows school to use their context to develop curriculum projects or enhance subjects or introduce subjects (for instance, Spanish in areas that border Spain etc.). Results suggest that this has facilitated experimentation and has enabled the provision of a

wide range of initiatives to enable integration specifically designed to take account of the school cluster context. Other benefits have been distributed leadership and the quick identification and response to issues (for instance, where a school experiences a high increase in children from migrant communities with poor or no Portuguese, the school cluster can respond quickly to implement intercultural linguistic support to those children and their families. Disadvantage is quite geographically concentrated, particularly in the main cities, where disadvantage is concentrated neighborhoods.

TEIP schools aim to:
- Improve learning quality and academic performance, and enable transition to further studies;
- Bring students closer to school and promote their full integration;
- Promote curriculum articulation;
- Prevent conflict and reduce behavioral issues;
- Prevent drop-out and absenteeism
- Apply internal assessment;
- Improve the school environment and quality of classroom learning.

There are four key TEIP actions
Action 1 – Support for improved learning
Action 2 – Preventing school dropout, absenteeism, and behavioral issues
Action 3 – Management and organisation
Action 4 – Improving school, families, community, and external partners relationships and encourage multiagency partnerships

TEIP schools are allowed double the hours of non-teaching hours to provide training and education from the State. The schools have more teachers than non-TEIP schools and have higher teacher: student ratios. All schools have some additional hours where they can allocate teachers to non-teaching activities (teacher CPD meetings, community work, supporting lessons), which is called a school credit. In TEIP schools, this support is doubled. TEIP school clusters also can recruit and involve other professionals such as social workers, psychologists, and other non-teaching experts. Currently, there are conversations around granting them additional support regarding additional equipment and school buildings. TEIP promotes teachers own professional development and education.

Evaluations of TEIP suggest that student outcomes and attainment have improved but there are still gaps between TEIP and non-TEIP schools, which is quite like evaluation of the DEIS programme. There are also issues with school attendance, while children may be

attending school, they may not be attending every day. However, results from PISA suggests that TEIP has contributed to reducing educational inequality in Portugal.

Watch Video: Inclusive Education in Portugal: Putting theory into Practice Here Dr Pedro Abrantes outlines the development of education in Portugal and the success of the Portuguese state in the dramatic increase in access and participation in education since the 1970s. Successive PISA results show quite positive improvement in language and numeracy since 2000, and amongst the lower attainment groups. He outlines the evolution of the TEIP programme and the success of TEIP, particularly in relation to school attendance and prevention of early school leaving. This was achieved through specific social and economic initiatives that were directed towards more marginalised communities. More flexible approach to pedagogy that was directed towards universal design learning also had a positive impact on staying on rates in education. TEIP was successful because it provided a multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach, where different agencies came together with education to provide a holistic package of support to marginalised communities (social care, health, community police, and other cultural organisation located in the local community). He argues that schools cannot address social exclusion on their own, they must work together to find solutions. It is likely that COVID has had a negative impact on the education and social development of children from TEIP school clusters. However, IT equipment have been distributed to students from TEIP school clusters to ensure access to education during COVID. When schools returned after the first lockdown in late 2020, schools devoted a lot of time to help children to catch up with their education. Funding has also been provided to schools to rebuild links with the community after the lockdown. He points out that while autonomy and innovation is encouraged (25%), some schools, particularly more academic schools are not using this 25% because they are focused on their students getting good results on the national examinations. This has been highlighted by the OECD as a particular issue.

Watch Video: Inclusion practices in a rural environment. This video focuses on the practical application of TEIP within a school cluster. The José Saramago Cluster of Schools, which is in a rural disadvantaged area in Portugal is one of the school clusters within the Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (TEIP). This school cluster (five schools from preschool to post-primary) is in an area that experiences quite significant social and cultural isolation. They have been part of the TEIP programme since 2009. The main activity of population is agriculture and viticulture and is about 50km from Lisbon. There are deficiencies at the infrastructure, such as basic sanitation, transports, or schools. The community where the school is located has poor educational attainment and the TEIP coordinator works to promote school community links.

Tania Eduardo takes us through the development of the school cluster since it gained TEIP status in 2009. The school cluster developed a range of projects such as a students' support office, mentoring, school clubs and psychological and vocational guidance service. The

school cluster also have transitioning programmes that are orientated at children to enable them to make a positive transition from compulsory to post-compulsory. The students' Support Office for instance to help student solve conflict etc. They have additional teachers for Portuguese and maths. In this case, two teachers work together and meet weekly to plan and prepare classes that have a more personalised and differentiated approach which creates teaching and learning activities tailored to a student's need. TEIP has enabled teachers to work together as a team to share knowledge and ideas. The school cluster key aim is to help children succeed in education and develop socially and emotionally. The develop a wide range of activities and clubs to help students learn and develop (music, art etc.). They also provide a range high school professional courses to encourage students who are at risk of leaving school early without qualifications. These courses range from wine technician course, restaurant, and bar service courses to preschool education courses. The school cluster works with a wide range of local social partners. Tania argues that school would not be successful without these social partnerships (local charities, food banks, Health services, parent teacher associations, City Hall, Parish halls, Child protection services etc.). There is an ethos of working together and partners work together to solve local issues.

There is a significant evaluation process involved for a TEIP school cluster. There is a TEIP evaluation every six months and schools must document literacy and numeracy, drop-out and absenteeism. There are internal evaluations that are carried out by internal staff on a weekly basis, and they provide feedback to teachers. There are also national assessment tests at 2nd and 5th and 8th grade. They also assess Portuguese and Mathematics at the end of 9th grade. This gives important feedback on a range of indicator and helps teachers to evaluate their teaching, learning and assessment strategies. At the heart of the evaluations is to promote the best educational experience for all children. The school-works closely with the students and the family throughout their education journey from preschool and at each transition point the teachers work together. For instance, the preschool teacher works with the primary teacher to enable that child make a successful transition. The school provides a range of adult classes that are targeted at parents.

Video: José Saramago Cluster of School (short video). This video which focuses on one school cluster in a disadvantaged rural area of Portugal, illustrates the integrated response to individual students, which is one of the key strengths of the TEIP programme. Consequently, through the various initiatives within the school cluster, children feel the school and teachers care about them. Children in this school come from a wide variety of challenging family backgrounds such as poverty, unemployment, single parent families, families where one parent is in prison etc. The school emphasizes parental involvement and work to increase parental interest in their children's education.

Read:
- European Commission (2014) Working Group Schools Policy: Early School Leaving – School governance and collaborative

practices. This report features the José Saramago Cluster of Schools.

- OECD (2020) Review of School Resources: Portugal, Paris: OECD
- Information on TEIP (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/support-measures-learners-early-childhood-and-school-education-53_en
- Dias, M (2014) Priority Educational Territories in Portugal: New patterns of educational governance? Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences 11: 4998-5002.

Assessment – Lesson Three

1. Reflecting on the video and reading material
   (a) what are the key strengths of the TEIP programme?
   (b) What are the key challenges for the TEIP programme
2. Compare the TEIP programme to a similar programme in your country/region – outline the key similarities and differences
3. What new ideas have you gained from completing this lesson

4

Lesson Four: Developing Home School Community Partnerships

This lesson will focus on successful initiatives that link the home and community to the school. Any educational initiative the purports to address exclusion and disadvantage much have the child and the family at the centre of its mission. Building strong family partnerships with the school has a significant impact on children as it can lead to enhanced educational engagement, positive attitudes towards their own academic ability, happiness and wellbeing, social development, and academic success. Therefore, engaging parents and families in education can be one of the most important strategies to improve children's outcomes. Family social, cultural and economic capital are important factors to consider when we think about family and school partnerships. Parents with poor education themselves or who are from minority or excluded groups may not have the confidence to engage with the school or have the skills to help their children. They may have negative attitudes towards school, which may stem from their own educational experience and therefore not engage with education or the school. This does not imply they are less interested in education or in helping their children to succeed in education, it is primarily because they lack the knowledge, resources, and know-how to seek help. Therefore, building partnerships with parents is absolutely critical if we are to address educational inequality, exclusion or disadvantage. Partnership with parents is one of the most important ways of addressing inequality of condition. Children have greater success in school (less likely to be absent etc.) when they

receive support, encouragement and guidance from parents, teachers, and the community. Partnerships that work well are those that are built and sustained with the parents. Good partnerships happen when parents are positively encouraged to become involved in their children's education via the school. Schools and teachers must meet parents halfway and create welcoming environments for the parents. Once a welcoming environment is created, the partnership can lead to much bigger elements such as building child parent relationships (especially where a parent is not living with the child etc.), encouraging parents to return to education themselves or developing literacy programmes for parents that are in the same school as the child. In essence, the school becomes part of the community. In this lesson, we will focus on two initiatives: the Home School Community Liaison initiative and the home school mediator, which are programmes attached to the DEIS and TEIP programmes respectively. Although different in several elements, they are both similar in keeping the family and the child at the centre of their inclusion strategy.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson 4

Home School Community Liaison Scheme: This Irish scheme was established in designated areas of disadvantage in 1990 and was the first major initiative that promoted and embedded parental involvement in the drive towards greater equality in education. It was initially developed as a pilot project, which was then rolled out after successful evaluations. It is now located in 259 primary and 181 post-primary DEIS schools across Ireland. Responsibility for the Home School Community Liaison scheme (HSCL) rests with the Education Welfare Service section of the Child Family Agency (TUSLA). The Department of Education is responsible for the allocation of HSCL coordinators in schools whose remit is to promote positive partnership between parents, teachers, and community to maximise outcomes of children at risk at dropping out; there is a particular emphasis on prevention of early school leaving. It is unified and integrated at both primary and post-primary, with the key aim of increasing cooperation between schools, parents, and other community agencies. HSCL coordinators are qualified teachers (primary or post-primary) who may work across several schools. Evaluations of the scheme have been positive in terms of student retention and academic performance (literacy and numeracy & state exams). HSCL coordinators work with TUSLA and School Completion Project to address issues that may be affecting children and their parents. They also engage with pre-school, primary and post-primary school heads to ensure successful transitions from one to the other, and into higher education. HSCL coordinator offers practical supports in schools such as: parent room, literacy initiatives etc. They undertake home visits and liaise with parents to help them understand supports being offered. They also facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting, and personal development programmes for parents, and engage with adult and family literacy and numeracy services in the local area. They facilitate the training of parents as community leaders, who then act as a support to other parents. The HSCL scheme is designed to promote active cooperation between home, school, and relevant community agencies and to help parents realize their own capacity to enhance their children's educational progress and to also assist parents in developing relevant

skills (numeracy and literacy etc.). The HSCL coordinator works across different DEIS schools, and it is based on prevention of further disadvantage. They are agents of change and promote the fostering of self-help and independence amongst parents. Home visitations is a crucial element in establishing trust with families. This is especially important for children from Traveller families and families from migrant backgrounds who may have poor or no English. The HSCL would also organize or facilitate courses for parents, such as literacy or numeracy classes. They may act on behalf of a parent with an organisation, for instance in completing paperwork or following up on a housing application etc. They would also liaise with therapists/counsellors when obtaining assistance for a child with a specific need. A major goal of the HSCL scheme is to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education and to promote positive and effective partnerships between the school and families. The HSCL would encourage parents to get involved in extra-curricular activities in the school, helping in the classroom (shared reading for example), and even in the development of school policies. The HSCL would be instrumental in assisting parents with poor or no English to become involved in the school community. Evaluation of the HSCL scheme have been positive in creating and sustaining positive partnership between families and schools.

Watch Video: How to promote equality of opportunity in DEIS (6:00 – 8:15; 15:00 – 23.40; 30 -35:10) and **Q & A How to promote equality of opportunity in DEIS** (1:13- 4:10; 6:42 – 11:25;). In this video both school heads (Tracie Tobin & Tiernan O'Neill) outline the HSCL scheme and how it operates within their school. They discuss how the HSCL coordinator work in partnership with parents and families to support the child's family in a wide variety of ways. They highlight the multifaceted roles the HSCL coordinator occupied in helping parents to developing a positive orientation towards education and in the process help their children succeed in education. Using practical examples, they highlight how the HSCL coordinator through a range of initiatives targeted at parents, help develop trust and break down barriers between the parents and the school.

Watch Video: The following video gives a very good overview of Home-school-Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Project. This was a video that was produced as part of the Irish Teaching Council's 2020 Feilte conference:
https://ms-my.facebook.com/TheTeachingCouncil/videos/in-this-feilte-2020-showcase-con-explains-the-three-strands-of-the-tusla-educati/994050161001912/

Read: *My Child My Vision* (2019) is a HSCL Parent Transfer programme that was designed by the Limerick HSCL coordinator in consultation with parents to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their child's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills (Link here).

It is an example of the type of parent programmes that are facilitated by the HSLC coordinators. The aim of the programme is threefold:

1. To empower parents to make an informed decision about their child's transfer from primary to post-primary education
2. To help parents feel more confident and comfortable about the transfer process
3. To increase parents' aspirations for their child's future to enhance their child's participation in the education process and to ensure their retention in post-primary school and to encourage their progression to third level education.

The programme is delivered over three years and takes place during the last two years of primary education and the first year of post-primary education. The Transfer programme emerged from conversations between the HSCL coordinator and parents around school transitions. Many parents were very anxious about the transition and had questions about choosing schools, post-primary subjects etc. Many parents had not completed post-primary education themselves. It was felt that parents need support to explore issues related to their child's transfer to post-primary education and this programme was developed with the parents. The HSCL coordinator works with the parents in a facilitative manner to empower parents to make decision about their child's education. The programme helps parents understand the application process for post-primary school, the importance of school attendance for learning, have confidence in completing application forms; and gain a broad understanding of the education system and develop a sense of ownership and involvement in their child's new school.

Home School Mediator: At the heart of the TEIP programme is building school family relationships to enhance educational engagement amongst the most excluded in Portuguese society. Developing strong Home School community links is a core remit of the TEIP programme and one of its key successes. There is a lot of flexibility given to school cluster in how they arrange home school community links, and the Home School Mediator is one example that has been specifically developed by the Santo António School Cluster. Mediators are supportive, understanding of and complementary to the teachers. Through working in partnership with teachers, children, parent, and the community, they create networks to support children. They are a key collaborator between the home and the community. The role of the mediator is critical to the success of the TEIP programme, they must develop strong relational skills to build trust and respect from children, their parents, the community, and the school. The mediator in TEIP school clusters is highly individualised support and personal engagements with the child, family, and community. The home school mediator has some similarities with the HSCL coordinator, in its focus on building bridges between the school and the family and community. The Santo António school cluster is an intercultural school in Portugal which has a high proportion of children from minority groups (including children from the Roma and Gypsy community and the undocumented). The cluster is based on 8 schools and has approximately children from 17 nationalities. The cluster guided by an inclusive approach to education, based on a philosophy of valuing difference and welcoming all children, irrespective of background. The cluster caters for children ranging from pre-school to post-primary education and the home school mediator works with the home and school to facilitate and encourage school engagement amongst the most excluded. They work within the community and in that way take the school to the community. The mediator works with families who

may have poor literacy and also assist in linking vulnerable families with the school. They also work with children at risk of dropping out of school. In comparison with the HSCL scheme, the home school mediator may be an individual from the community, whereas in the HSCL scheme, the coordinator is a qualified teacher. Another similar TEIP home school community project is the "Travelling Pre-school Education – Below and Beyond Glass Rooms" programme based at Coruche, central Portugal which targets Roma children and their families. One of the biggest strengths of that programme is the location of activities within the Roma community in familiar cultural and physical places or at pre-school settings bringing families and schools closer together. Activities are designed in an informal and flexible manner, meeting the needs and interests of the parents. Results suggest increased positive family engagement with schools. In cases where families are disconnected and marginalised in both society and education, small, targeted intervention such as the home school mediator are important to bridge the divide between the home, community, and the school. In essence, facilitating access to supports through active strategies targeted at the most vulnerable groups, may be one of the most important ways of achieving equity within education. Results suggest that it has proved effective for the child, their parents and the school and has created positive community – school links that has led to greater school engagement.

Watch Video: A School for Everyone, (Santo António School Cluster), Portugal.

In this video, the school head Manuela Espadinha from Santo António School Clusters (8 schools from pre-school to post-primary). It is situated in the middle of two communities a Gypsy and African community, in addition to other minority and Portuguese children – approximately 17 nationalities. It is a multicultural school cluster and the literacy rates amongst the community surrounding the school is very low. They aim to be inclusive school that is open to everyone and work to develop close links with the community. They offer a wider curriculum to cater for all children, including children with special needs. They also offer adult classes. The class teacher plays a central work in welcoming new children to their class and works to establish connections with the families. Other school staff work to integrate the children into all activities. They have a welcome day on the first day of school where children and their family are welcomed to school. They provide a pictorial handbook to parents who may not be able to read, and it outlines the ethos and activities of the school. All cultures are values and the school values difference – this is the ethos of the school cluster. They have a range of school activities that are orientated towards valuing all children such as celebrating family day, the Gypsy Soul project, dancing projects & emblematic and intercultural days. The school has achieved the intercultural school seal, which is awarded by the Department of Education and by the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, which awards schools for their remarkable diversity ethos and promoting educational success. They translate books in different languages so that all children have access to literacy. The School Cluster organizes two days of activities that are open to the community, where children's activities and class projects are exhibited. Those projects celebration the intercultural ethos of the school. For instance, the projects demonstrate a range of skills

such as music and dancing and linguistic diversity, which promotes and celebrates children's individual cultural background. They also provide 'Stories of my Country' sessions, where parents come into the school to share knowledge about their country of origin. The aim of their school initiatives is to build strong solidarity amongst the entire school community.

The home school mediator is one element of the board of social and psychological intervention. The other two strands of intervention are social intervention service and the psychological guidance service. The sociocultural mediation is very important in the school, and this is led by a member of the Gypsy community who works within the school. They establish connections between the different communities and bring students to school. She acts as an advocate for the parents, particularly if there are issues. The home school mediator works in tandem with the school to foster a positive educational orientation amongst children and their family to enable children take a step forward to achieve success in education and in life. They enable the voice of the family to be heard and listened to. The Board of Social and Psychological Intervention looks out for vulnerable families and their children (such as undocumented families) which enables the school to respond and support those families even in providing basic but essential needs.

Recommended Reading:
- The following provides information on the HSCL Scheme: https://www.gov.ie/en/service/6c72da-home-school-community-liaison-scheme-hscl/
- Ross, C. et al (2021) Home School Community Liaison Coordinators perspectives on supporting family wellbeing and learning during Covid-19 school closures: critical needs and lessons learned, Irish Educational Studies, DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2021.1915842.
- Weir, S et al (2018) Partnership in DEIS schools: A survey of Home-School-Community Liaison coordinators in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland, Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Information on the Home-School-Liaison scheme: https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/hscl/

Assessment – Lesson Four

1. Reflecting on the Irish Home School Community Liaison School and the Portuguese Home School Mediator, what are the key lessons from both schools in relation to the importance of building home school links?
2. If you were to develop Home School Community Links, what factor would you need to consider in your own country context?

Lesson Five: A Regional Response: Developing Partnerships across Schools to Enhance Teacher Continual Professional Development

Any society that wants to create an inclusive society, must examine how the education system is creating an inclusive educational experience for all children, and this starts with the teaching profession. Most initiatives addressing exclusion, marginalization and disadvantage focus on specific school and community projects that are targeted specifically at the children and in some cases, children and their parents. However, we also need to consider the teachers and school leaders, particularly those working in schools serving marginalised communities. Teachers' own constructs and pedagogical practices are central to the realisation of children's rights in education and indeed, teacher knowledge is now recognised as one of the key factors determining positive learning outcomes for children. We need teachers who are passionate and competent (knowledge and pedagogy) teaching all children and particularly, children from working class and other marginalised communities.

Teachers need to be provided opportunities to reflect deeply on their own positioning in terms of children's rights and participation, but also more holistically to include their pedagogical position and practice. We need teachers with the knowledge, skills, and values to provide an inclusive, challenging and extending educational experience for all children, through the provision of equal opportunities to learn and participate in their classroom and school. Similarly, 'craft' components of teaching must be based upon and informed by fresh insights into how best to meet the increasingly fast pace of change in the world which children inhabit. This lesson focuses on one initiative that aimed to enhanced teachers' competence and skills in delivering in literacy education in DEIS primary schools in Limerick. It achieved this through the provision of literacy education continual professional development courses (CPD) to participating teachers, the development of communities of practice and mentoring.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson 5
This lesson will explore an Irish case study, the Limerick Primary School's Literacy Initiative which was a regional initiative that was directly related to DEIS literacy targets and was specifically aligned to the 2010 national strategy to improve literacy amongst children. The need for a cohesive, multi-agency strategy to address social inclusion in Limerick city was a central element of the regeneration project which was rolled out in Limerick city in 2008. At that time, Limerick city was in turmoil as it had one of the highest unemployment rates in Ireland (Republic) and suffered from high levels of crime and criminality. There were a number of criminal families who were operating from and controlling some of the most disadvantaged areas in Limerick city. They were also feuding amongst themselves. Following major community and State policing effort, things turned around and a regeneration project was rolled out for those areas of Limerick city most affected by crime and marginalisation. Focus was also placed upon the DEIS schools in those areas, particularly on

attendance and attainment in literacy and numeracy. There was a specific concern about the low patterns of literacy attainment by children, a significant drop-off in literacy attainment at middle/senior class levels at primary school and significant differences in outcomes according to gender. In addition, the upskilling of teachers was proposed in a 2011 project that focussed on the lives of children in several geographical areas of Limerick City (How are our Kids – see below). Consequently, stakeholders came together, and the Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy initiative was developed in 2011; it was funded by the Department of Education and philanthropic organisation (Atlantic Philanthropies - Chuck Feeney). The stakeholders had a long history of working together prior to the initiative. It focussed on the continual professional development of primary school teachers to support best practice in oral language and literacy instruction. It was a city-wide initiative based in all DEIS primary schools (15 schools) and was a collaborative partnership project between the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick Education Centre and primary school teachers. It also included input from the PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) and external advisers (DES). The project has now moved its focus to numeracy CPD for teachers. The strategic literacy CPD was tailored to equip teachers to respond effectively to the literacy needs presenting their schools. It aimed to improve both teacher knowledge and drive classroom change, particularly in literacy instruction.

The project was in the most economically and socially disadvantaged areas of Limerick city. The targeted DEIS schools catered for children coming from low-income families and whose parents themselves had poor literacy and numeracy skills. It was a cooperative multi-agency response to address shortcomings and provided enhanced opportunities for learning in both spoken and written literacy. The initiative targeted under-preforming children and through positive intervention (via enhanced teacher practice) helped raised oral and general literacy skills. All stakeholders (policy makers, MIC, Limerick Education Centre and most importantly schools and teachers) contributed to the formation of good practice literacy materials, including evaluation of same, to enhance children's literacy development. The emphasis was on whole school approach to literacy and oral language with the aim of upskilling and deepening teachers' understanding of literacy instruction. There was an emphasis on sharing, extending, and supporting good practice and supporting school principals and teachers in the management and delivery of change and in leading literacy in their school. The CPD activities were delivered by lecturers at Mary Immaculate College (Teacher Education College) who had extensive expertise in literacy instruction and international best practice in literacy instruction. The initiative showed positive gains in teachers' knowledge and enhanced their confidence and competence in literacy instruction in their classrooms. It also built upon their existing skills and knowledge.

Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative focuses on continued professional development of teachers to support best practice in oral language and literacy instruction and the application of advanced literacy approaches at whole school level. It provided support

to enable teachers to examine their own practices in literacy instruction and provided them with support to enhance their acquisition of new literacy skills etc. Initially, the project team carried out an audit of school knowledge and skills, and literacy resources available in schools and then developed an intensive CPD programme on literacy instruction. A comprehensive CPD programme was developed using different approaches such as: formal lectures on literacy current and best practice in literacy instruction, teacher mentoring and training, lesson observation of teachers and feedback of lessons observed. The aim was to embed the lessons learnt at a whole school level. There were also innovative practices such as Open Days at Schools where teachers could visit a school and observe literacy lessons. Sharing of of good practice sessions were organised where teachers presented observations etc. at formal national education conferences. The initiative also led to the development of a Limerick Literacy Community of Practice which was facilitated by MIC. At the time that the initiative was rolled out, separately the Department of Education provided additional teachers to support literacy in DEIS schools in Ireland. This followed a poor PISA result for Ireland in 2009 for literacy and numeracy and was particularly poor for DEIS schools. Those additional teachers formed a network of teachers who led the dissemination, implementation and embedding of the enhanced literacy instruction practices within the schools, between partnered schools, and across the wider network of DEIS schools and teachers. They were also supported by Local Education Centre, MIC lecturers and other external experts. Those teachers went on and organised Open days, and these literacy leaders modelled and coached best literacy practices. They were also key agents in supporting teachers and school leaders to develop communities of practice of literacy practice. The open days enabled teacher engagement with the literacy initiative and provided an opportunity to acknowledge and showcase effective practices and provided real classroom placements where teachers could observe new literacy skills in action. The HSCL coordinator also worked on the project as the work of the school on the initiative had to be supported by the work of the home. The HSCL coordinator was involved in supporting the parents to develop their own literacy skills particularly through encouraging reading and reading to their children. The HSCL modelled how to read a book and how to support their children's reading and through this, the parents were involved in the initiative, making it a multifaceted approach.

Importantly, the initiative was developed and predicated upon educational partnership and on promoting networking between the different stakeholders (teacher education, practicing teachers and school heads, Department of Education, Local Education Centre etc.). This approach committed to sharing expertise and knowledge between the different stakeholders. Most importantly, the initiative was successful because there was a willingness and commitment by teachers (and school heads) to engage with new literacy instruction practices and to innovate within and across the schools. The initiative had a positive impact on enhance teacher knowledge and collegiality between the teachers from different schools. Furthermore, a sense of increased self-efficacy has developed because of the access to expertise from teacher education and other external experts who provided literacy talks, the support and coaching skills of the network teachers and opportunities to see literacy interventions in practice in schools. Most importantly, the participating teachers

noted positive changes in their practices and approaches to literacy instruction because of having participated in the initiative. The initiative remained in place until 2020 and by 2016 the initiative focused on STEM.

Watch Video: [An Initiative to address inclusive education: The Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative](#) (1:35 to end)

Watch Video: [Q&A An Initiative to address inclusive education: The Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative](#). This video features Dr Carmel O'Doherty who presents an overview of the initiative, the historical background to the initiative, national policy developments at that time the initiative was rolled out, the key outcomes and lessons learnt. Dr O'Doherty was one of the original Department of Education officials who established the partnership and worked on the initiative.

Read:
- Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative (2017) Promoting Communities of Effective Practice, Executive Summary, Limerick: MIC, Limerick Education Centre and Department of Education.

Assessment – Lesson Five

1. Outline three elements underpinning the success of the Limerick DEIS Primary Schools' Literacy Initiative?
2. If you were to develop something similar in your own country/region what factors would (a) enable its successful implementation (b) hinder its successful implementation

| 6 | ## Lesson Six: Reaching beyond the School: Developing School – Community and Teacher Education Partnership |

This lesson extends the philosophy of multi-agency working to encompass teacher education. Teacher education is one of the most important parts of the inclusion jigsaw. If a society wants teachers who are empathetic and inclusive teachers, who see the potential in all children and who value difference, it must start with teacher education. Teacher Education must educate future teachers who see themselves as agents of change, who continual reflect on their own practice, who are highly knowledgeable and skilled and who are passionate about teaching and learning. They must also see themselves as on a continuum of learning throughout their teaching career, who are flexible and adaptable to new ways of approaching pedagogy and education. Teacher education must provide opportunities

for student teachers to experience a wide variety of schools, and particularly the opportunity to work with disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Teacher education colleges must also reach out, embrace, and work with communities that are marginalised and disadvantaged as well as agencies working with and for those communities.

This lesson will explore the contribution of the Targeting Education Disadvantage through dialogue (TED) project, which is based within the Curriculum Development Unit, at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) to promote social inclusion in the Limerick region. MIC is a state funded College of Education and offer education programmes across the continuum from early childhood through to primary, post primary, further education and beyond. It is one of the largest teacher education colleges in Ireland (Republic) and therefore, has significant responsibility in educating future teachers who have appropriate and high levels of professional knowledge, skills, and values and who most importantly recognise their responsibility to provide an optimum educational experience for all children. A concern for social justice and equality is core to the work of MIC and particularly within our ITE programmes, where student teachers are provided with opportunities to reflect upon societal inequality and to interrogate how education can be used as a transformative tool to challenge inequality. They are also encouraged through professional practice and the integration of theory and practice to view themselves as agents of change. MIC offers student teachers lots of opportunities through professional practice, professional studies, and foundation theory modules to work in local disadvantaged communities. MIC has developed deep and long-term partnerships with local DEIS school and state and regional agencies to promote social justice and inclusion. One of the key projects within MIC that has worked specifically with marginalised communities to bring MIC to the local school community is the TED project.

TED is specially focused at linking teacher education expertise within MIC to local DEIS schools and is specifically targeted at Limerick DEIS schools and surrounding rural DEIS band schools. The main aim of TED is to provide support to schools via consultation, advocacy, training, research, and partnership. TED staff (who are in the main primary teacher educators) work on a range of initiatives to encourage positive attitudes to education and increase participation in education. It also provides avenues for multi-agency working and consultation on a range of educational. issues. Initiatives that are promoted and supported by TED are targeted at DEIS communities, particularly those in Limerick City, via schools to create positive attitudes towards education and build capacity within DEIS schools and communities.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson 6
Since it was established in 1998, TED has sought to improve and enhance educational outcomes for children. It is primarily focused on providing guidance, research support and practical support for initiatives to DEIS schools. It is also involved in coordinating research projects that are directly focused on school communities. For instance, TED employ research staff (who are primarily qualified teachers)

to work with DEIS schools on a range of initiatives for example, Embracing Diversity Nurturing Integration (EDNIP) project and the TEAL language project, which works with and supports children of migrant families in Limerick city. TED via MIC provide funding from educational initiative such as the Studio Art project, MIC Choir, and the LEGO DEIS project. In the case of those three projects, MIC teacher educators, an external artist and student teachers work with children in DEIS schools to produce an Art Exhibition and a Christmas Concert. The student teachers undertake placements in the DEIS school while the projects are underway. The three projects are part of the student teachers' education specialist, and they generally spend one morning in the DEIS schools for about two months. These initiatives give student teachers opportunity to work in DEIS schools and the children benefit from the intensive expertise that is brought into the classroom from MIC. For instance, in the LEGO specialism, children learn about math, science, IT, coding and robotics and design their own robot as part of the final product

The TED project facilitates a connection between the specific expertise of MIC staff and the identified needs of schools and voluntary and statutory groups within the local community and at national level. Through dialogue and collaboration, TED seeks to unlock the enormous potential within DEIS schools and communities. It seeks to improve outcomes for children through harnessing the expertise of MIC in the service of children, parents, and teachers, primarily in DEIS contexts. The TED project has created a significant footprint within the Limerick area with schools and statutory and voluntary agencies both at a local level and nationally within the broader education community. Key staff in TED sit on DEIS schools Board of Management and organisations such as Bedford Row project, which focuses on children who have a parent in prison.

TED has been working to promote educational attainment and access in the following ways: management and facilitating of DEIS networks, delivering workshops on literacy and numeracy, developing CPD activities for school staff, advocacy, training, and research. Generally, TED works with DEIS schools to identify an issue and/or an need, and would draw upon expertise within MIC to respond to that need, for instance a CPD event etc. For instance, the LEGO education initiative was developed from DEIS schools indicating they would like children to avail of robotic education in after school clubs, and they approached TED who then linked relevant lecturers to the DEIS schools and together, with cooperation from LEGO Education, they established the LEGO Education specialist. It is rolled out in primary DEIS schools every Spring.

TED facilitates three school networks who come together one/twice a semester to discuss issues of concerns to the schools: PLUS, Cur le Chéile and OSCAILT. The Oscailt network members are school heads of DEIS Band 1 primary and post-primary schools in Limerick. Plus, network members are DEIS band 1 primary schools in Limerick City and County (usually HSCL attend these meeting), Youth Encounter Project and Special schools. Cur Le Chéile network members are school heads and deputy heads of DEIS Band 1 Primary

schools. The school networks grew out of a need for information sharing, and support amongst school leaders of DEIS schools. The networks serve as a central pivot of TED work and have been the seedbed for development and delivery of TED initiatives and intervention programmes. Concerns with absenteeism and behavior issues, for example, led to TED seeking funding to conduct action research and to develop and publish resources addressing these issues. Network activities also provide for peer and inter-school support, sharing of good practice and the development of communities of practice. TED also advocates on policy issues and is a key member of range of local education and non-education boards and committees to influence decision making. The Literacy Community of Practice grew out of research conducted by TED in 2013 with education providers servicing the needs of young people aged 12-18 to explore how TED could support positive literacy outcomes for this age cohort of students. Membership includes DEIS post-primary schools, Youthreach Centres and a Youth Encounter Project.

TED has been responsible for bringing MIC and DEIS schools and communities closer together in a range of ways. School principals and teachers from DEIS schools provide lectures and CPD opportunities for initial teacher education students at MIC. These sessions help challenge student bias towards DEIS communities. Similarly, though TED MIC staff provide CPD and additional support to DEIS schools. TED has facilitated the development of a positive attitude towards DEIS communities amongst student teachers. TED has been successful because it has worked at the ground level and is willing and keen to listen to and build partnerships with DEIS schools and communities. It has through its work (facilitation and research) sought to listen to different viewpoints and encourage shared leadership and partnership with schools. Current projects that really exemplify the multiagency approach of the TED project and the centrality of the school and children in both its focus and work are the Embracing Diversity Nurturing Integration Project (EDNIP) and Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL Project).

EDNIP Project: This project is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and supported by the Department of Justice and Equality. EDNIP is a partnership initiative initiated in 2017, which aims to promote and support migrant integration into school and community life, working across five DEIS band 1 primary schools in Limerick. EDNIP was developed to support schools to embrace diversity and nurture integration of migrant families, many of whom did not speak English. The other element of the project was to increase communication between the school and migrant families and between families themselves and between migrant families and Irish families in the selected schools. The project created opportunities for migrant families, especially women and babies/toddlers to meet and learn together in the school. It was a way to address isolation and promote engagement with the school. It offered opportunities for the adults to learn English and the classes were delivered in the schools. It organised social, cultural, and historic trips for the families in Limerick city and outside Limerick, to help facilitate a sense of belonging in Limerick and in Ireland, as some families had only a limited experience of visiting local areas. During the summer 2018 & 2019, families (together with Irish families

in the designated schools) went on trips to the beach and had trips to a local farm. There were sport and music events and the EDNIP also organised family fun days, intercultural events and trips to the museums. Coffee mornings were organised to bring the school community together. It also worked with migrant fathers to increase engagement with education. The first evaluation has found that communication between the school and migrant families has been enhanced and between the Irish and migrant families.

TEAL Project: This project grew from the EDNIP project in 2019 but specifically focused on linguistic diversity and worked to increase teacher knowledge and confidence in the teaching of children whose first language is not English. The project is in several primary and post-primary DEIS schools in Limerick city, who have experienced the biggest increase in children whose first language is not English. The project aims to maximise their potential in learning English as well as preserve their own heritage languages. A range of resources were developed to support teachers working in linguistically diverse classroom and to celebrate intercultural education. They were also provided with intensive CPD sessions and communities of practice emerged amongst the teachers participating on the project. The communities of practice serve as important support networks for teachers by enabling teachers to come together to discuss issues, challenges and share ideas and good practice. It was also designed to support the children and parents from communities that did not speak English, through the provision of English classes for adults and intercultural events for children where linguistic and cultural diversity was celebrated (see video for further information).

Watch Video: This video features Dr Ann Higgins, coordinator of TED. She explains the ethos of TED, its mission and vision and goes through some of the key projects and successes of the project (Link here) and **Read** the associated PowerPoint

Watch Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oktiI1il8hY – this short video provides an overview of the TEAL (teaching English as an additional language) project which was established to respond to the needs of children, whose first language is not English. It was designed to support children and their families in their language journey. Schools have become increasingly multilingual and multicultural and DEIS schools have experienced a big increase in the number of children from minority groups. The project was developed from discussions with DEIS school leaders who spoke about the challenges involved in supporting children and parents. They felt teachers required additional skills in relation to language teaching. Out of the conversations, the project emerged, and its focus was on the provision of additional professional development in the area of EAL, particularly in responding to these culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. The project aims to celebrate the cultural diversity in the school and to respect the child's first language by promoting their own language alongside English. The project providing CPD to teachers and build a bank of resources that teachers could use with their children. It also created communities of practice (online and face to face) where teachers came together to share resources, guidance and support for teaching children that are culturally and linguistically diverse. The project is still in operation in

Limerick.

Read:
- Higgins, A. (2017) Bedford Row Family Project: Holding the Suffering, Limerick: Curriculum Development Unit, MIC.https://www.mic.ul.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/21/BEDFORD%20ROW%20RESEARCH%20REPORT%202017-reduced-compressed.pdf

Visit the TED website for additional information here: https://www.mic.ul.ie/faculty-of-education/ted?index=0

Assessment - Lesson Six
1. Reflecting on the video and reading material, why is it important that schools & communities develop partnerships with teacher education colleges?

7 | # Lesson Seven: Summary

This lesson provides a brief overview of the module learning outcomes and key points emanating from the modules. The previous lessons have demonstrated in both a theoretical and practical level, the importance of striving for both equality of opportunity and equality of condition in the provision of education for all children. Each lesson has emphasized the important of developing, maintaining and promoting a child-centered approach within education. Everything schools and education practitioners do must be for the benefit for each child. Schools, school leaders and teachers must promote an inclusive learning environment that is differentiated and challenging for all children.

Watch Video: Introduction to summary
There must be a focus on teachers' own professional development and an ethos within schools and education systems where school and teachers work together. We heard about a wide range of innovative programmes that were led by teachers and school leaders for the benefit of the school community. For school initiatives to have successful outcomes, we need highly knowledgeable and passionate teachers teaching children. Teachers must be encouraged to engage in continual professional development and develop communities of practice where they share ideas etc. that will ultimately benefit the children they are teaching. Space must be provided for teachers and school leaders to reflect critically on their teaching strategies and indeed, on the education as a whole. It is important that teachers

and schools do not reinforce inequality and stereotypes. We need passionate teachers who care about the holistic development of the child. We also need teachers and school leaders who are willing to open their doors to the community. When children see their community represented and valued in the school, they will have a more positive orientation towards education. Schools must be places where children and parents feel safe, welcomed and valued, irrespective of their social and cultural background.

The examples presented in this module have really emphasized that schools and teachers cannot work in isolation and developing positive partnership with the wider community and parents is crucial if children are to have positive outcomes in education. A wide variety of initiatives must be targeted at disadvantaged communities to achieve equality of condition. They must be a mixture of bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Initiatives also need to be flexible and adaptable to the local school contexts. Schools need to reach out to the community, which then allows the school to take on a much broader role within the community. Developing positive relationships with parents can enhance not only their child's education, but their own. They may be encouraged to go back to education and attain further qualification or get involved in the school community.

The examples in the module have emphasized the importance of multi-agency partnerships to cater for the range of needs that children and parents face. A multi-agency approach enables a broad range of professionals to provide interconnected and focused support. The school cannot address every issue on its own. Research and evaluation with, for and by the school needs to be part of developing good schools. Schools need to monitor key educational data and evaluate programmes and initiatives. Evaluations can lead to further improvements or modifications to a programme. Evaluations can provide encouragement to schools and teachers about the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies.

The module has presented a range of initiatives and supports that are targeted at marginalised groups and communities. It was emphasized that context matters, and initiatives need to be flexible to the specific group of students and parents. Schools therefore require some autonomy and freedom in the way they tailor, and focus supports. What works for one school and their community may not work in another school. However, all schools and school staff must have high aspirations for their children and the focus must be on encouraging children to remain interested and engaged in education to enable all children achieve their optimum outcome. The school and the school community must create a positive welcoming environment that celebrates different and enables a child to progress positively on its education journey. All partners need to work towards this goal, so that all children achieve their human potential.

Assessment of Module
1. Reflecting on the lessons in this module, develop a two-page strategy you would present to policy makers in your country/region aimed at addressing educational marginalization at one of the key stages (for instance, preschool, primary, post-primary, further education, vocational education etc.) In your strategy, reflect on both macro and micro initiatives and those that are bottom up and top down.

Module Study Resources

- Department of Education and Science (2005) DEIS Action Plan, Dublin: Department of Education and Science https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/1302_deis_action_plan.pdf,

- Information about DEIS is found here: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/ This section documents the range of supports made available to DEIS Band 1 and DEIS Band 2 Schools.

- DEIS Plan: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/#deis-plan-2017

- Information about Home School Community Liaison Scheme: https://www.tusla.ie/tess/hscl/

- Information about the School Completion Project: https://www.tusla.ie/tess/scp/

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- A number of DEIS evaluation reports can be found at the Education Research Centre, Dublin City University. See: https://www.erc.ie/studies/deis/

- Higgins, A. et al. (2020) Embracing Diversity, Nurturing Integration Project (EDNIP): sharing the story, evolution, model and outcomes of a research and intervention project in five DEIS Band 1 primary schools in Limerick city 2017 – 2019, Limerick: Curriculum Development Unit, MIC. https://www.mic.ul.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/140/EDNIP%202020%20Full%20Report.pdf

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