STAIRS MOOC - Book of Modules

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

MODULE 3

Module 3: Special Education, Inclusion & School Transitions

Introduction

This module introduces the learner to the complex nature of special education and the promotion of full inclusive educational practice. It will document the development of special education from education in special education schools, special classes in mainstream schools to full inclusive practices in mainstream education. The module will plot the uneven development of full inclusive practices for children and young people in Europe. It will explore some of the challenges facing children with special education, particularly when making key transitions within education and from education into the labour market. Through good practice exemplars, the module will examine the potential of full inclusive practices and will document the impact of teacher education and multi-agency collaboration in promoting full inclusion for all children from preschool to vocational education and training. It will also document the history of special education and will explore different models of inclusive practice within schools. The module will emphasise the importance of an inclusive mindset in promoting and maximising educational and labour market opportunities for all children and young people.

Syllabus

The module will firstly explore the concept of inclusion and inclusive education. It will then trace the policy path to Inclusion and Inclusive Education. It is important to trace the policy path that underpins our commitment in Europe to an inclusive society and inclusive education system. The module will document current developments in inclusive and special education across Europe. The module will examine the path Portugal and Ireland have taken in their journey towards a fully inclusive education system and the challenges both faces. It will also explore the journey of other European countries and assess their current position. The module will also emphasise the importance of incorporating and including children's voice and agency when considering inclusive frameworks & models. Enabling children to participate has now became a right, particularly in relation to inclusive education. The Portuguese and Irish good practice case studies documented lots of examples where children are consulted and participate in meaningful decision making in matters that affect them. This can range from choosing informed pathways, including children in the design of courses and programmes and packaging programmes to fit the individual child's particular talents or interestsIt will examine the impact of COVID on children with Special Education and some innovative approaches currently in practice. This final lesson will explore an Irish multi-agency response which helped children with autism make the transition back to school after a prolonged Covid lockdown in 2020. It is evident that an individual school cannot eliminate exclusion and inequality on its own, it needs assistance from other schools and agencies. Schools benefits in numerous ways from partnerships it develops with other stakeholders and agencies. At the heart of this partnership

approach is a strong desire to assist children and parents, particularly children and parents living in marginalised communities to benefit from, and have successful outcomes in education (social, emotional, and academic success). This module interrogates the importance of multi-agency approaches in the promotion of full inclusive educational practice. It will also explore the range of issues & challenges facing schools when addressing broad inclusion issues such as early school drop-out, absenteeism and parental disengagement. It will document challenges in creating and sustaining inclusive practices, particularly within an educational system which promotes academic excellence and competition. It also explores the challenges recognising and appreciating individual differences within mainstream education. Through the analysis of case study initiatives, it will explore effective inclusive models and how multi-agency approaches can prevent early school leaving amongst children and young people with special education needs. There will be a particular emphasis on inclusion as a right for all children and young people, irrespective of ability. The module will emphasise how education systems need to be responsive to the needs of a diverse student population, to create and sustain learning environments that value and respect everyone. This module will emphasise the importance of a systematic approach to building more inclusive and participative democratic education systems.

Learning Outcomes

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

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

- Interrogate the concepts of special education and inclusion, and inclusive practice that is targeted at marginalised and vulnerable communities.
- Explore the challenges and potential underpinning the full inclusive school & classroom.
- Interrogate contemporary theories, debates and practices of inclusion and special education.
- Evaluate challenges for children & young people with special education and those from minority backgrounds, making transitions from one educational level to the next and into the labour market.

2 Affective: Attitude and Values

- Appreciate the importance of inclusive practice in valuing the unique talents of all children and young people.

- Value the impact of multi-agency approaches in addressing special education and inclusion and prevent early school leaving amongst children and young people from minority backgrounds and those with special education.

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, you are 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 required readings which are included as links in each lesson.

- Complete the assessment

1	## Introduction
	Welcome to this module: Special Education, Inclusion & School Transitions. This module builds upon and expands on the content explored in the previous two modules. It will trace and document developments in inclusive practice across Europe, at both a policy and practice level. The module will interrogate the importance of multi-agency approaches in the promotion of full inclusive educational practice. It will start by defining the concept of inclusion and inclusive education and the key policy developments that have supported the path to full inclusive education. It will document challenges in creating and sustaining inclusive practices, particularly within an educational system which promotes academic excellence and competition. It also explores the challenges in recognising and appreciating individual differences within mainstream education. Through the analysis of case study initiatives, it will explore effective inclusive models and how multi-agency approaches can prevent early school leaving amongst children and young people with special education needs. There will be a particular emphasis on inclusion as a right for all children and young people, irrespective of ability. The module will emphasise how education systems need to be responsive to the needs of a diverse student

population, to create and sustain learning environments that welcome, value and respect everyone. This module will emphasise the importance of a systematic approach to building more inclusive and participative democratic education systems. Like the last module we will focus on the journey of both Portugal and Ireland who were the two sharing countries in the STAIRS project. We will look at their similarities and differences in their attempt to promote inclusive education. This module will also emphasise the importance of voice, particularly that of the child and young person with special needs. All societies purporting to promote inclusion must provide opportunities for all children to make informed decisions and be given freedom and opportunity to exercise their voice, choice, and independence. Indeed, this is one of the most important pieces in the inclusion jigsaw. Finally, it will examine the impact of COVID on children with special education and will present an innovative multiagency approach that was put into place in Ireland to ensure children with Autism made as smooth a transition back to school as possible after one of the country's longest lockdown periods. Essentially, through good practice exemplars, the module will examine the potential for full inclusive practice and the impact of multi-agency collaboration in promoting full inclusion for all children from preschool to formal education and training. Throughout each lesson, there will be a particular emphasis on the importance of developing an inclusive mindset in promoting and maximising educational and labour market opportunities for all children and young people. I will leave you with a quotation from UNESCO (2005: 10) *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access for all*: "Education for All means ensuring that all children have access to basic education of good quality. This implies creating an environment in schools and in basic education programmes in which children are both able and enabled to learn. Such an environment must be inclusive of children, effective with children, friendly and welcoming to children, healthy and protective for children and gender sensitive."

Lesson One: Exploring the concept of Inclusion and Inclusive Education

We begin the journey by defining inclusion and special education. We will draw upon material (video and associated material) from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, which promotes a rights-based approach to inclusive education. It also provides significant guidance & advise to help bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson One

Lesson one introduces you to the concept of inclusive education and the key components underpinning an inclusive education system. It will examine what inclusive education is, and the complex task of bridging policy and practice. While we may have legislation and policies supporting inclusive education, it may not be happening in practice at the individual school level or more

broadly within teacher education or at the teacher continual professional development level. Therefore, we need legislation, policy and practice all working together to promote inclusive education. We will examine why it is important to promote inclusive education and how everyone benefits when all learners are included and made to feel they belong in our classrooms and lecture halls. Inclusion supports and promotes diversity and ultimately changes lives. It also helps society to be more open and welcoming to diversity, in all its variety and in the longer term, makes our homes, schools and workplaces more vibrant and interesting places to learn and develop together. Every individual child has the right to an inclusive education experience, where their individual abilities and talents are celebrated, supported, and nourished. This will ultimately benefit society in a wide variety of ways, including economic, cultural, sporting, and educational benefits. You are now invited to watch the videos and read the associated material and complete the assessment tasks at the end of this lesson.

What is Inclusive Education: Read: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248254/PDF/248254eng.pdf.multi. In this 2017 report, UNESCO provides a comprehensive overview of inclusion and equity in education and provide a guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education:

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education presents a short position paper on inclusive education systems here: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/PositionPaper-EN.pdf

The following video also highlights their vision for Inclusive Education: The Agency's Vision for Inclusive Education Systems - YouTube.
After listening, please reflect on its key messages and then think about your own country's approach to inclusive education.

In the next video they document the key principles underpinning inclusive education and the complex task of bridging policy and practice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4J8RvjJZCo.You can also read the key principles in more depth here: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/KeyPrinciples-policybrief-EN.pdf

In the next infographic, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education outline how to promote inclusive education. They highlight three key ingredients to achieve inclusive education: Legislation, Policy and Practice. They argue that inclusive education systems change lives and improve societies and when we include all learners in our classrooms, everyone benefits. https://www.european-agency.org/resources/multimedia/infographic-inclusive-education-across-europe

Assessment – Lesson One

1. What key lessons are contained in the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education position paper on inclusive education system.
2. What are the three ingredients necessary for the promotion of inclusive education?

Lesson Two Tracing the Policy Path Towards Inclusion and Inclusive Education

In lesson one, we explored the concept of inclusive education. It is also important to trace the policy path that underpins our commitment in Europe to an inclusive society and inclusive education system. A useful policy timeline (up to 2005) is presented on page 14 in UNESCO (2005) Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All (see link below). They chart the timeline from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2005. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides the foundation for inclusive education policies in Europe and beyond.

Watch Video: Introduction to lesson two

In lesson one we explored the concept of inclusive education, but it is also important to trace the policy path that underpins our commitment, particularly in Europe to an inclusive society and more specifically to inclusive education. The policy path to inclusion has been a long road, beginning in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1959 we had the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, but it was not until 1979 with the UNESO International Year of the Child that we focused specially on children as having individual rights. This led, ten years later in 1989 to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was a watershed moment for children's rights and associated policies, in guaranteeing that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children and that every child has the right to life, survival and development. Most importantly, all the rights guaranteed by the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind. This was also the first time that the voice of the child was guaranteed, specifically that the child's views must be considered and considered in all matters

affecting them. Importantly, it guaranteed the right to education, and especially to an education that enables all children to achieve the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including their cultural and spiritual development. In 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All, emphasised the right to basic education, with a particular focus on girls. It also focused on universalizing access and promoting equality for all, irrespective of disability etc. The path towards an inclusive society and inclusive education has been mapped out. The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities moves to a new level away from viewing people with disabilities as "objects" of charity, in need of medical treatment and social protection towards viewing the as individuals with rights, who can claim those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Salamanca Statement in 1994 was the first time that a framework for action on special needs education was outlined and agreed. It is the most significant international document in the field of special education and most importantly endorsed the principle of inclusive education based on three grounds: an educational justification, a social justification, and an economic justification. In 2019, UNESCO confirmed their continued commitment to the Salamanca Statement in the Cali Commitment to Equality and Inclusion in Education. More recently, inclusive education has been linked to sustainable development and this is most evident in UNESCO (2015) Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development.

National education legislation, policy and practice must now devote specific attention to inclusion within a rights-based approach, ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality inclusive learning opportunities from early childhood care and education, compulsory education, and training beyond formal education. It is the responsibility of all, from government, policymakers through to teachers to ensure access to high-quality, inclusive, and equitable learning environments. Curricula must be broad, including, culture, the arts and sports and pedagogical practices must be culturally responsive and incorporate linguistic diversity. Curriculum must be flexible, adaptable, and accessible for all learners. This involves changes and modification in content, pedagogical approaches, strategies, including assessment strategies and the promotion of universal design for learning, to ensure all children are enabled to learn and flourish. It also is imperative that teaching staff etc. have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions to promote inclusive education within their classroom and school.

Read:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

- United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities (2006) https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html.

In 1990 the World declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, affirmed the right of all people to education. It represented an important step towards defining inclusive education https://bice.org/app/uploads/2014/10/unesco_world_declaration_on_education_for_all_jomtien_thailand.pdf and was the precursor to The Salamanca Statement four years later.

The Salamanca Statement was the first time that a framework for action on special needs education was outlined and agreed. It is the most significant international document in the field of special education and most importantly endorsed the principle of inclusive education based on three grounds: an educational justification, a social justification, and an economic justification.

UNESCO (1994) Salamanca Statement on principles, policy and practice in special needs education: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

In 2019, UNESCO confirmed their continued commitment to the Salamanca Statement in the *Cali Commitment to Equality and Inclusion in Education*: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370910

Similarly, in 2005 and building upon the commitments from Salamanca, UNESCO produced comprehensive Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines_for_Inclusion_UNESCO_2006.pdf

More recently, inclusive education has been linked to sustainable development and this is most evident in UNESCO (2015) Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

Assessment - Lesson Two

1. The Salamanca Statement emphasizes curriculum flexibility – what does this mean for you?

2.   Why is it important to consider the recruitment and training of educational personnel when we are planning for inclusive schools?

3

Lesson Three: Inclusive Practices in Portugal

In the first two lessons we have defined Inclusive Education and examined the legislative and policy context. Now we are going to look at Inclusive education practice at the individual country level. We will focus on the two sharing countries (Ireland and Portugal). We will also provide comparisons with the learning countries (Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, and Czechia). Lesson three will focus on the Portuguese journey towards full inclusive education. Portugal's inclusive education framework is among the most comprehensive in Europe. It has developed legislation, policy, and support structures at school level to meet the needs of all students and to promote educational equity and inclusion more broadly. Their journey (legislative, policy etc) is relevant for other countries that wish to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in their education systems.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson three
In the first two lessons we defined Inclusive Education and examined the legislative and policy context. Now we are going to look at Inclusive education practice at the individual country level. We will focus on the two sharing countries (Ireland and Portugal). We will also provide comparisons with the learning countries (Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, and Czechia). This will focus on the Portuguese journey towards full inclusive education. You will have come across some of the videos in the previous module, but here you are asked to specifically examine broad inclusive education approach in Portugal. Portugal's inclusive education framework is among the most comprehensive in Europe. It has developed legislation, policy, and support structures at school level to meet the needs of all students and to promote educational equity and inclusion more broadly. Their journey (legislative, policy etc.) is relevant for other countries that wish to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their education systems. However, Portugal faces challenges. It must continue to develop capacity-building of teachers and school leaders. There is a need for greater collaboration between stakeholders and a need for consistent implementation of the inclusive education framework.

In the first video, Professor David Rodrigues, Professor of Special Education, Technical University of Lisbon provides an overview of concept of inclusive education and the development of inclusive education in Portugal, which has been quite dramatic since 1974. He very much promotes the idea of building the airplane while flying, which means that we must build inclusion while inclusion is happening. He outlines five building blocks: the development of inclusive public education policies that improve equality for all;

differentiation and flexibility of curriculum to promote inclusion; teacher education; collaboration and finally the need for innovation. We then move onto the video from Ferreira Dias, secondary school, Portugal, which works with children from a range of challenging and disadvantaged backgrounds. The school is in a disadvantaged area of Lisbon and the video documents their inclusive approach. This video illustrates what is possible when we embrace inclusion.

In final video, Dr. Natália Alves, Public University of Lisbon presents the policy approach of IVET (vocational education) provision in Portugal. She questions whether IVET provision is a pathway to inclusion or a soft type of exclusion. She also points out that inclusion is a very tricky concept to define and can put the blame on schools rather than the State. She points out that IVET tended to be viewed as the poor relation to academic study in higher education, and a second chance/choice for students. However, IVET has provided equal opportunities for young people, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups. You are now invited to read the articles and consult the various weblinks provided for this lesson. which will give you a greater in-depth analysis of the Portuguese inclusive system. At the end of the lesson, you are invited to complete the assessment.

Watch Video (4:09 - 42:00): Inclusive Education: building the airplane while flying - YouTube. In this video Professor David Rodrigues, Professor of Special Education, Technical University of Lisbon provides an overview of concept of inclusive education and the development of inclusive education in Portugal.

Watch Video: Ferreira Dias Secondary School - YouTube This video provides an example of an inclusive approach taken by a secondary school in Portugal that works with children from a range of challenging and disadvantaged backgrounds. The school is in a disadvantaged area of Lisbon and places the child at the centre of their educational philosophy.

Watch Video: IVET provisions: a pathway to inclusion or a 'soft' kind of exclusion? - YouTube . In this video, Dr Natália Alves presents an overview of the policy approach to IVET provision and questions whether IVET provision is a pathway to inclusion or a soft type of exclusion.

Watch Video: Edugep - Civil society supports the public educational system - YouTube. This video presents an overview of EduGep which is a public private partnership working to include marginalised and unemployed young people and adult to reintegrate back into education, training, and employment.

Read and Consult: https://oecdedutoday.com/portugal-inclusive-education/ This provides an overview of inclusive education in

Portugal. It outlines it key strengths as well as the challenges. It points out that Portugal must continue to develop capacity-building of teachers and school leaders, greater collaboration between stakeholders and consistent implementation of the inclusive education framework.

Read: Information on Portuguese Inclusive Laws; https://allmeansall.org.au/portugals-new-school-inclusion-law-small-country-taking-big-steps-spirit-means/

Read: 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

Read: Alves I. (2019) International inspiration and national aspirations: Inclusive education in Portugal.

Assessment - Lesson Three

Assessing the Portuguese Inclusive Education Framework, how does your country's approach compare:
- Key similarities _____
- Key differences: _____

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4 | ## Lesson Four: Inclusive Practice in Ireland

This lesson will focus on Ireland's inclusive education journey. Ireland is not unique in experiencing substantial reform in inclusive education provision in recent decades and has moved away from a medical model of SEN and from integration to inclusion. While the UNCRC (1989) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) have greatly influenced perspectives regarding approaches to inclusive education, Ireland has not fully implemented a truly inclusive module. There are still special classes in mainstream schools and special schools. However, Ireland has made great progress and there is now a comprehensive inclusive education framework and there are substantial inclusive education modules provided in Initial teacher education programmes and at the continual professional development level. Where Ireland has still work to do, is the full inclusion of Irish Travellers in education. Irish Travellers are amongst the most disadvantaged marginalised group in Irish society.

Watch Video: Introduction to Lesson Four

In this lesson we will investigate inclusive practice in Ireland. Ireland is not unique in experiencing substantial reform in inclusive education provision in recent decades and has moved away from a medical model of SEN and from integration to inclusion. Ireland has a unique and complex history in relation to its approach to inclusive education. While special and general education developed in parallel, legal actions by parents in the 1990s prompted legislative and policy changes which dramatically altered the landscape, in terms of both the resources and nature of provision for students with additional needs. While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the Salamanca Statement in 1994 have greatly influenced perspectives regarding approaches to inclusive education, Ireland has not fully implemented a truly inclusive module. For instance, there are still special classes in mainstream schools and Special Schools. However, Ireland has made great progress with more children with SEN attending mainstream schools, than in previous generations. At the teacher education level, there is now substantial inclusive education modules provided in Initial teacher education programmes and at the continual professional development level for teachers. There is also lot of positive work being done at the further education level, particularly Youthreach which is the State's education, training and work experience programme for early school leavers aged 15 – 20. It caters for young people for whom mainstream education has not been successful and for whom the supported and needs-based model that underpins Youthreach is much more suitable. It gives them the opportunity to gain qualifications, develop their social and personal skills and progress into further education, training or employment. Where Ireland has still work to do, is the full inclusion of Irish Travellers in education, that needs most attention. Irish Travellers are amongst the most disadvantaged marginalised group in Irish society.

In this lesson you will learn about Ireland's inclusive education journey, In the first 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. You will then be invited to watch the inclusive education approach employed in YouthReach settings and for Traveller education. You will then be directed to consult the associated web links and readings to gain a deeper understanding of inclusive education in Ireland. At the end of the lesson, you will be invited to complete the assessment.

Watch Video (beginning – 14:57): **A Way to Address Inclusive Education in Ireland**. 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.

Watch Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOLCY_Sp3TI This presents an overview of the work of YouthReach which focused on the student needs and developing an inclusive approach to education and training.

Read: https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf. This document presents an overview of the Traveller and Roma inclusion strategy for Ireland.

Information on Irish Inclusive and 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

National Council for Special Education (2011) Inclusive Education Framework https://ncse.ie/researches/InclusiveEducationFramework_InteractiveVersion.pdf

Read: Kenny N. & McCoy, S. (2020) Special Education Reforms in Ireland: Changing systems, Changing Schools

Read: Cahill, K. (2021) Intersections of social class and special education needs in a DEIS post-primary school: school choice and Identity

Read: Kavanagh, A. M. & M. Dupont (2021) Making the invisible visible: managing tensions around including Traveller culture and history in the curriculum at primary and post-primary level.

Watch video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHhqc2pQeVE. This video discusses the broad Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller histories in the curriculum in Europe. On 1st July 2020, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation for the first time calling on its 47-member states to include the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. In this webinar Friends, Families and Travellers invited education professionals, equality organisations, politicians and people from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities to share good practice and ideas to drive change.

Consult: http://www.tvgcork.ie/sites/default/files/downLoadableResources/TravellerInclusionGraphic.pdf. This gives an example of a toolkit that was developed to promote Traveller inclusion in youthwork.

Assessment - Lesson Four

Assessing the Irish Inclusive Education Framework, how does your country's approach compare: Ireland and outline:
- Key similarities _____
- Key differences: _____

Lesson Five: Inclusion Practices across Europe: Experience in Croatia, Czechia, Hungry and Slovenia

This lesson focuses on the inclusive education approach in the four learning countries in the STAIRS project and will demonstrate through the various country reports the journey each country is taking towards a fully inclusive education system. It will also become evident that while each country has different challenges, they have a range of similarities.

Watch Video: Introduction to lesson five

This lesson focuses on the inclusive education approach in the four learning countries in the STAIRS project and will demonstrate through the various country reports the journey each country is taking towards a fully inclusive education system. It will become evident that while each country has different challenges, they have a range of similarities. Amongst the challenges are the need for more resources in schools to enable inclusive practice to take place, more qualified teachers, and special needs assistants. There is also a need for upskilling and the provision of continual professional development for teachers. In some instances, there is a lack of flexibility within the education system to implement inclusive education and perhaps there is also a need for greater commitment at state level to inclusive education. There is also evidence of fragmented service provision for children with special needs, lack of training for practicing teachers to update their pedagogical skills and a lack of SEN education within Initial teacher education programmes. However, it is also important to remember how far we have come and the positive strides all countries are making towards inclusive education in Europe.

In the first video (see below), the head of the European Agency for Special and Inclusive Education presents the vision for inclusive education across Europe. The focus should be on how you 'do' inclusive education. He cautions against comparing countries but rather to learn from each other. We are all on the journey together and are at different points. The European Agency approaches inclusive education from three levels – legislation, policy and operational structures and processes. Their aim is to look at prevention,

intervention and compensatory policies, with an emphasis on moving towards intervention. Inclusion is based on human rights – the right to belong and this belonging ultimately enhances education. Inclusive education is a school-based issue, a curriculum issue and teacher education issue. To promote true inclusion, we must all work together. An inclusive education system leads to a fairer inclusive and equitable society. The speak leaves us with the following thought: "We are all different and equal and we should celebrate this".

The second video (see below) showcases an Elementary School in Barcelona, Spain, and its inclusive approach. The school is in a disadvantaged area of Barcelona and through its inclusive practice enables children to succeed. It promotes an inclusive approach through the provision of an open-door policy, where parents and the wider community are welcomed and encouraged to become involved and participate in the life of the school. Equity is promoted through the inclusion of children from diverse cultural background etc. The school has achieved academic outcomes above the average Catalan standardized tests. It is one example of what can be done when we embrace an inclusive mindset. You are then invited to select two of the countries and examine their inclusive education journey. At the end of the module, you are invited to complete the module assessment.

Watch Video: https://www.european-agency.org/resources/multimedia/inclusive-education-international-perspective This short video presents the vision for inclusive education across Europe. The focus should be on how you 'do' inclusive education.

Watch video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFTI-U2aUCQ&t=2 This video showcases Joaquim Ruyra Elementary School, Barcelona, Spain and its inclusive approach.

Read: Malta has developed a comprehensive national inclusion education framework that will provide additional international comparison: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/MEDE_Inclusion_Framework_A4_v2.pdf
You are now invited to select **two** Countries and explore their inclusive education journey.

The Experience in Croatia
- **Consult:** https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/croatia This site provides a comprehensive overview of legislation and the policy framework in Croatia.
- **Consult**: https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Croatia.pdf This document provides and overview of inclusive practice in Croatia. While it points to improvements in inclusive practice, there are still issues with the

provision of full inclusive education for children with disabilities, particularly regarding access to teaching assistants and the implementation of an appropriate inclusive education programme and the need for improvements in teacher education. The inclusion of children from Roma is still a significant issue.

- **Read:** The need for more professional development for school leaders in Croatia is emphasized in the following paper: https://eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/26/contribution/50638/
- **Read:** This paper compared Croatia and Poland: https://eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/24/contribution/48108/
- **Read:** Ralic, A. (2012) Inclusive Education in Croatia

The Experience in Czechia
- **Consult: https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/czech-republic**. This site provides a comprehensive overview of legislation and the policy framework in the Czech Republic.
- **Read: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/cpra_czech_republic_grid.pdf** This document provides and overview of inclusive practice in Czechia. While it points to improvements in inclusive practice, there are still issues with the provision of full inclusive education for children with disabilities. The document points to lack of appropriately qualified teachers with special education expertise, weaknesses in the provision of inclusive education continual professional development of teachers and initial teacher education programmes that do not adequately incorporate inclusive education in their teacher education programmes. The report also points to fragmented services and lack of educational psychologists within the education system.
- **Read:** Slovík, J (2021) Comprehensive support for pupils at risk of school failure in inclusive education: theory and school practice in the Czech Republic
- **Read**: Langer, M (2017) Current perspectives on Inclusive Education
- **Read:** https://validity.ngo/2019/06/11/czech-republic-rolls-back-on-inclusive-education-for-children-with-disabilities/
- **Read**: https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/inclusive-education-czech-republic/3281#

The Experience in Hungary
- **Consult: https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/hungary/legislation-and-policy**. This site provides a comprehensive overview of legislation and the policy framework in Hungary.
- **Consult:** https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-29_en. This site presents an overview of special needs provision within mainstream education in

Hungary.
- **Read:** Toth, A. (2014) Theory and Practice of Inclusive Education in Hungary
- **Read:** Magyar, A. (2020) Exploring Hungarian teachers' perspectives of inclusive education of SEN students

The Experience in Slovenia
- **Consult: https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/slovenia.** This site provides a comprehensive overview of legislation and the policy framework in Slovenia.
- **Consult:** Special education needs provision within mainstream education | Eurydice (europa.eu). This site presents an overview of special needs provision within mainstream education in Slovenia.
- **Read:** Skubic Ermenc, K. (2019) Approaches to Inclusive Education in Slovenia from a Comparative Angle (Link here)
- **Read**: Schmidt, M. (2020) Attitudes of Slovenian parents towards pre-school inclusion (Link here)
- **Read**: Kavkler, M. (2015) Inclusive Education for children with specific learning difficulties: Analysis of opportunities and barriers in Inclusive education in Slovenia.

Assessment – Lesson Five

Compare your country's inclusive education approach to the selected countries and outline, Two key similarities and two key differences:
Similarities:_____
Differences _____

Lesson Six: Inclusion and the voice of the child

In this lesson we will focus specifically on why it is important to incorporate children's voice and agency when considering inclusive frameworks & models. Enabling children to participate has now became a right, particularly in relation to inclusive education. The Portuguese and Irish good practice case studies documented lots of examples where children are consulted and participate in meaningful decision making in matters that affect them. This can range from choosing informed pathways, including children in the design of courses and programmes and packaging programmes to fit the individual child's particular talents or interests.

Watch Video: Introduction to lesson six

In this lesson we will focus specifically on why it is important to incorporate children's voice and agency when considering inclusive frameworks & models. Indeed, including the voice of the child and enabling agency is enshrined in European legislation and must begin from early years onwards. Child agency did not emerge in a vacuum. Wider, global, and macro changes occurred to facilitate agency, and one of the most important was the UNCRC in 1989. It is worth keeping in mind the four General Principles of the UNCRC:

1. that all the rights guaranteed by the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
2. that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
3. that every child has the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and
4. that the child's views must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12).

Therefore, enabling children to participate is a right, particularly in relation to inclusive education and the child is views as a citizen with rights. However, while rights are central to the issue of citizenship and while participation is acknowledged it may not happen in practice. For instance, research has found that adults such as parents and teachers often intervene on behalf children or assume that they speak for the child, meaning that the child may not have any direct input on their wishes. This is highlighted in relation to children with SEN. However, the Portuguese and Irish good practice case studies, documented lots of examples where children are consulted and participate in meaningful decision making in matters that affect them. This can range from choosing informed pathways, including children in the design of courses and programmes and packaging programmes to fit the individual child's particular talents or interests.

In this lesson you will have the opportunity to watch and read about good practice initiative occurring across Europe. I would now invite you to go through the lesson watch the videos and consult both weblinks and reading on children's agency and active participation in education.

On 16 October 2015 the Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union hosted the Agency's fourth Hearing entitled 'Inclusive education: Take action!'. The aim of the event was to empower and ensure the involvement of learners in shaping educational policies. Information about the hearing are available here: https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/take-action-inclusive-education-delegates-reflections-and-proposals

- **Watch the associated video: Inclusive Education: Take Action! - YouTube**
- **Watch:** Young voices on inclusive education https://www.european-agency.org/resources/multimedia/young-voices

Consult: Young people's views on inclusive education **: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/young-views-on-inclusive-education_YoungViews-2012EN.pdf**

Consult: Young people's views on diversity in education: **https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/young-voices-meeting-diversity-in-education_EPH-EN.pdf**

Consult: This toolkit provides interesting examples of facilitating children's voice in the early years: **https://www.staffsscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Listening-To-The-Voices-Of-Young-Children-RS-1-19.pdf**

Consult: This website presents information on Aistear which is the early childhood curriculum Framework in Ireland, where facilitating children's voice and agency and providing an inclusive learning environment for all children. https://www.aistearsiolta.ie/en/introduction/overview/

Read: Messiou, K (2019) The missing voices: Students as a catalyst for promoting Inclusive Education

Watch Video: One of the good practice projects in the STAIRS project, Youthreach, really emphasises student empowerment and voice, this is articulated in this video**:** Youthreach Ireland. The National Picture - YouTube

Read: Aubrey C. et al (2017) The Regulated Child, in A. Owen (Editor) Childhood Today, London: Sage Publications

Read: Caslin, M. (2017) *The SEN/D Child* in A. Owen (Editor) Childhood Today, London: Sage Publications

Watch video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCSNLm_5OKY which outlines Gypsy, Roma and Travellers' experiences in higher education.

Assessment - Lesson Six

1. Assess and evaluate the development of child agency in inclusive policy and outline the advantages of incorporating children's opinions when designing educational policies

Lesson 7: A Bridge Back to School: an example of an Inclusive educational module from the COVID 19 Pandemic

This final lesson takes you through an example of an Irish multi-agency response which helped children with autism make the transition back to school after a prolonged Covid lockdown in 2020. It is evident that an individual school cannot eliminate exclusion and inequality on its own, it needs assistance from other schools and agencies. Schools' benefits in numerous ways from partnerships it develops with other stakeholders and agencies. At the heart of this partnership approach is a strong desire to assist children and parents, particularly children and parents living in marginalised communities to benefit from, and have successful outcomes in education (social, emotional, and academic success). Most of the previous lessons have illustrated the power of multi-agency partnerships in leading change. It is evident that an individual school cannot eliminate exclusion and inequality on its own, it needs assistance from other schools and agencies. Schools' benefits in numerous ways from partnership it develops with other stakeholders and agencies. At the heart of this partnership approach is a strong desire to assist children and parents, particularly children and parents living in marginalised communities to benefit from, and have successful outcomes in education (social, emotional, and academic success).

Watch Video: Introduction Lesson Seven
This final lesson takes you through an example of an Irish multi-agency response which helped children with autism make the transition back to school after a prolonged Covid lockdown in 2020. When the lockdown finished, there was a lot of concern about children with special needs and particularly making the transition back to school. Several agencies and teachers, including a teacher education college came together to design a toolkit in the form of a booklet that could be used by parents, teachers, and special needs assistants to help the child adjust to school. The toolkit booklet aimed to address some of these concerns and to provide practice activities that parents and teachers etc. could do with the children to alleviate any anxieties they may have had. It is an evidenced based intervention that incorporated the voice of the child by starting from a strengths-based approach. It was based on theoretical insights, evidence-based interventions that worked and implementation at the ground level (by schools and teachers with parents). It is a small example of how theory and practice are linked together. The Bridge back to School was an autism-friendly learning toolkit and resource that was developed in collaboration with the autism charity, As I Am charity, Mary Immaculate College, Teacher Education College, and a number of primary and post-primary teachers. It was funded by SuperValu, one of Ireland's largest grocery and food distributor. SuperValu is noted for autism-friendly activism and works with As I Am to provide autism friendly shopping and supports autism friendly communities. The resource and toolkit were launched in July 2020 and aimed to support

families and schools to help children with autism make the transition back to school and most importantly re-establish routines that were disrupted by the closure of schools during the first Covid lockdown in March 2020. It emphasizes that for some children, the return to school after a lockdown is often not a simple transition and that they may need support in a variety of areas and ways. The toolkit is aimed at teachers and carers, teachers and special needs assistants and offers support on sensory integration, preparing for the new school year, dealing with worry and anxiety. It also deals with self-regulation and communication and social and emotional help. The resource was designed to support children in primary and post-primary schools to understand, prepare and manage the return to school. The resource was used by teachers during the July provision period, where they used the resource to help prepare children for the transition back to school in early September. July provision (also called summer provision provides educational supports during the summer to children with special needs and those at most risk of educational disadvantage). July provision includes:

•   School-based summer programme for children with special needs in special classes, special schools, and mainstream schools
•   Home-based provision for children with complex needs (where a school-based programme is not available)
•   Summer camps in DEIS focussing on numeracy and literacy.

It is a small example of how agencies can come together quickly and pool knowledge and resources to produce an educational tool to enable positive educational outcomes for children.

Watch Video: [A Way to Address Inclusive Education in Ireland](#) (15:36 -37:25). One of the authors and editors of the booklet, Maria Dervan takes you through the development of the resource and toolkit. Maria is a primary school teacher who works with children with special education needs. She takes you through the various elements of the toolkit, some exemplars and expected outcome. The toolkit is based upon Universal Design for Learning and that flexibility can be seen throughout the toolkit.

Read: https://supervalu.ie/brochure/autism-friendly/mobile/index.html
Consult further resources: https://asiam.ie/advice-guidance/resources/bridge-back-to-school/

The following YouTube video is a subsequent webinar that was organized by the autism charity As I am and Supervalu which built upon the Bridge Back to School resource and toolkit in August 2021. It broadened out the discussion to incorporate strategies for children with autism and their parents when making the transition to primary school and from primary to post-primary. Full details here: https://asiam.ie/educational-supports/
Webinar can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RafLQ_1ThYc&t=164s

Information on July Provision can be found here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7dcb8-summer-provision-school-based-programme-in-post-primary-schools/#

Information about SuperValu and the Autism supports they promote can be found here: https://supervalu.ie/real-people/autism-friendly/autism-friendly-shopping-hub

This Bridge back to School toolkit focuses on building a sense of belonging for all children and Dr Margaret Egan shares her thoughts here in relation to the toolkit: **Watch video: A Way to Address Inclusive Education in Ireland** (38:16 to 40:26)

Assessment - Lesson Seven

On a scale of 1 to 10 (a) evaluate the partnership approach in the Bridge Back to School project, where 1 is weak and 10 is strong (b) provide rationale for your evaluation.

| 8 | ## Lesson Eight: Summary

This module traces and documents developments in inclusive practice across Europe, at a legislative, policy and practice level. The module interrogated the importance of each three levels in the promotion of full inclusive educational practice. It started by defining the concept of inclusion and inclusive education and the key policy developments that have supported the path to full education inclusion. It then examined specific inclusive education practices in Ireland and Portugal and the inclusive education journey in Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary & Slovenia. It also focused on the centrality of child voice and agency and finishes by exploring one example of an inclusive education approach in Ireland.

Assessment of Module
1. Reflecting on the lessons in this module and key messages underpinning inclusive education, develop a two-page inclusive education strategy you would present to policy makers in your country/region aimed at improving inclusion of children with SEN or minority and excluded groups. You can focus on one stage, for instance, preschool, primary, post-primary, further education, vocational education etc.). |

Module Study Resources

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

- United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities (2006) https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html.

- UNESCO (1994) Salamanca Statement on principles, policy and practice in special needs education: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf

- UNESCO (2019) Cali Commitment to Equality and Inclusion in Education: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370910

- Alves, I. (2019) International inspiration and national aspirations: Inclusive education in Portugal, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23:7-8, 862-875, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1624846.

- Alves, I. et al (2020) Developing inclusive education in Portugal: Evidence and challenges, Prospects: Springer

- Kenny N. & McCoy, S. (2020) Special Education Reforms in Ireland: Changing systems, Changing Schools, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2020.1821447

- Kenny N. & S McCoy & G Mihut (2020) Special Education Reforms in Ireland: changing systems, changing schools, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2020.1821447

- Cahill, K. (2021) Intersections of social class and special education needs in a DEIS post-primary school: school choice and Identity, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2021.1968519.

- Kavanagh, A. M. & M. Dupont (2021) Making the invisible visible: managing tensions around including Traveller culture and history in the curriculum at primary and post-primary level, Irish Education Studies, 40:3, 553-569, DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2021.1932548

- Messiou, K (2019) The missing voices: Students as a catalyst for promoting Inclusive Education, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23:7-8, 768-781, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326.

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- Ralic, A. (2012) Inclusive Education in Croatia, available on ResearchGate.
- Slovík, J (2021) Comprehensive support for pupils at risk of school failure in inclusive education: theory and school practice in the Czech Republic, nternational Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2021.1879950.
- Langer, M (2017) Current perspectives on Inclusive Education in the Czech Republic, The Cupola: Gettysburg College.
- Toth, A. (2014) Theory and Practice of Inclusive Education in Hungary, available on ResearchGate.
- Magyar, A. (2020) Exploring Hungarian teachers' perspectives of inclusive education of SEN students, Heliyon 6 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e03851 .
- Skubic Ermenc, K. (2019) Approaches to Inclusive Education in Slovenia from a Comparative Angle, Conference Paper available on ResearchGate.
- Schmidt, M. (2020) Attitudes of Slovenian parents towards pre-school inclusion, European Journal of Special Needs Education, 35:5, 696-710, DOI: 10.1080/08856257.2020.1748430.
- Kavkler, M. (2015) Inclusive Education for children with specific learning difficulties: Analysis of opportunities and barriers in Inclusive education in Slovenia.