

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



INCLUD-ED: Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from Education

An EU-funded research project exploring successful actions for educational and social inclusion in Europe

November 2011

INTRODUCTION

Educational systems in Europe: Actions for Success

In today's knowledge society, education can serve as a powerful resource to achieve the Europe 2020 Strategy objective: to lift over 20 million people out of poverty. However, at present, most school systems are failing as shown by the fact that many European citizens and their communities are being excluded, both educationally and socially, from the benefits that should be available to all. One out of every five young people in the EU is at risk of poverty, and this is directly linked to their employment opportunities and to the educational levels attained. This situation can be reversed, and research can provide key elements for European policy making to inform this process and achieve the 2020 Strategy objective in education: to reduce the share of early school leavers from 15% to 10%.

INCLUD-ED aimed at enlightening the question about **how education can contribute to social cohesion in the context of the knowledge based society**. The project has focused on **explaining educational actions that can influence school failure or success at the level of compulsory education** (pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, including vocational and special education programmes within regular schools) **and their relationship to other areas of society** (e.g. housing, health, employment, social and political participation), **particularly focusing on social groups that are vulnerable to be socially excluded** (youth, migrant, cultural groups e.g. Roma, women and people with disabilities).

This Policy Brief presents the results of the first Cluster of INCLUD-ED. A new classification of three different ways of pupil grouping and available human resources allocation that lead to different results in academic achievement has been developed: mixture, streaming and inclusion. Special attention has been paid to differentiate between mixture and inclusion and on the efficiency of the latter as successful educational actions on enhancing all children's success.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

How can we identify Mixture and Streaming?

INCLUD-ED has identified strategies of grouping pupils and the use of human resources that are shaping the future prospects of the most vulnerable groups of EU society. These are **Mixture**, **Streaming** and **Inclusion**. Whereas the two first are related to exclusion the latter promotes educational success and social cohesion.

In **Mixture** modality of grouping, most classrooms only have one adult (teacher) who teaches a large group of pupils with diverse cultural backgrounds and abilities. In this situation, **teachers find it difficult to respond through mixture to the existing diversity of needs**. There are children who are not well-attended.

Streaming is aimed at addressing *mixture* downsides through adapting the curriculum, ability grouping, and often using additional human resources to separate those pupils who do not follow the mainstream classroom. Researchers have found a negative relationship between streaming and academic results; **streaming does increase the disparity between pupils' performance and reduces learning opportunities for low-achieving pupils and pupils from vulnerable groups**. There are many varieties of streaming in European educational systems.

Four main forms of streaming were identified based on an analysis of educational reforms in Europe: (a) the organisation of classroom activities according to **ability levels**; (b) the organisation of **remedial groups and segregated support from the mainstream classroom**; (c) the **exclusionary individualised curriculum**, which consists of an individualised curriculum adapted to the level of a particular pupil, which results in lowering the level of the official curriculum; and (d) the **exclusionary choice**, which means that choosing between different subjects in the curriculum lead to unequal academic and social future pathways.

How do we differentiate between Mixture and Inclusion?

One of the main challenges is the **confusion between inclusion and mixture**. Studies and statistics have compared streaming with mixture and inclusion, which are regarded as being the same. When teachers were asked if they separated pupils or adapt the official curriculum based on ability, they answered yes or no. Those teachers who answered negatively were assumed to carry out mixture practices, without being differentiated from those who carried out inclusive practices. Therefore, **in order to analyse the effects of streaming and inclusion, it is necessary to separate inclusion from mixture**. This is because **they lead to very different educational situations and have different effects on the pupils**.

How do we identify Inclusive practices?

Simply educating children with different abilities together (*mixture*) does not guarantee an efficient response to the diversity of the pupils. Streaming practices are characterised by allocating extra resources (e.g. support teachers) to help those pupils with more difficulties, but this is accompanied by ability grouping or by different placements. In **inclusion, the same resources that are used for segregated educational practices aimed at pupils with more difficulties are reallocated into the regular classroom to attend all of the pupils together.**

Unlike mixture, in inclusion all pupils actively follow the learning process with the help of the teacher and other human resources. The inclusion approach not only provides equal opportunity but is deeply oriented toward equality of results for all children.

Five main types of inclusion have been identified throughout Europe: (a) **Heterogeneous ability classrooms** with reallocation of human resources in the regular classroom; (b) **Inclusive split classes**; (c) **Extending learning time** through a longer school day, or a school year or activities that promote family support and education in the school or at home; (d) **Inclusive individualized curriculum**, and (e) **Inclusive choice**.

	MIXTURE	STREAMING	INCLUSION	
Based on	Equal opportunity	Difference	Equality of results Equality of differences	
Homogeneous or heterogeneous groups?	Heterogeneous	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	
How many human resources are used?	1 teacher	More than 1 teacher	More than 1 teacher	
All together or separated?	Together	Separated	Together	Separated
	Mixed ability classrooms	Organisation of classroom activities according to ability levels. It can be (a) in different classrooms, or (b) in the same one Remedial groups and support segregated from the regular classroom	Heterogeneous ability classrooms with existing resources	Inclusive split classes with mixed ability pupils

Source: INCLUD-ED (2009). *Actions for success in schools in Europe*. Brussels: European Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

Successful educational actions based on efficient pupil grouping and human resources allocation

- **Overcome mixture**, the traditional way of organizing heterogeneous classrooms (where all children are together with one teacher), as it does not ensure attention to every pupil in a heterogeneous classroom. **Instead, promote inclusion actions**, which respond better to pupils' needs in the current informational era.
 - **Avoid streaming** (the separation of children through ability grouping within schools), as it negatively impact the achievement of low performing pupils.
 - **Replace streaming practices for inclusive ways of grouping pupils**, which are more efficient actions to respond to children's diversity and achieve school success for all; while streaming damages the achievement of low performing pupils, inclusion raise the academic achievement of all pupils.
 - **Promote inclusion actions, especially when schools contain pupils from vulnerable groups backgrounds**, such as children from ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma), second language learners (e.g. immigrants), and children with disabilities. **Inclusion actions increase the school achievement of all pupils and improve inter-group relations** in classrooms and schools. There are different inclusion actions that have proved to be successful: **heterogeneous groups with reallocated resources, inclusive split classes, extension of the learning time (during school time and after school time), inclusive individualised curriculums, and inclusive choice**. Research has found Interactive Groups to be a very successful form of heterogeneous groups with reallocated of existing resources.
 - **Reallocate those human resources dedicated to streaming practices into inclusion actions**. The same resources can be used to separate pupils according to their learning level or to include everyone in the regular classrooms. While the first option reproduces learning inequalities, the latter promotes success for all. **Inclusion groupings can also comprise volunteers from the community**.
 - **Base educational reforms and policies on successful actions** in order to achieve school success for all children.
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RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Objectives

INCLUD-ED is an integrated project aimed to **analyse educational strategies that contribute to social cohesion and educational strategies that lead to social exclusion**, within the context of the European knowledge based society, providing key elements and lines of action to improve educational and social policy.

Methodology

Based on the **Critical Communicative approach**, it consists in the construction of knowledge through intersubjective dialogue, the inclusion of traditionally silenced voices and the identification of elements that contribute to social exclusion and those that lead to social inclusion. INCLUD-ED involves a wide range of scientific activities, among them policy and literature review, qualitative and quantitative fieldwork.

The results presented here stem from the analysis conducted in projects 1 and 2. Project 1 analysed **educational theories, educational reforms** in the EU-25 and Romania and **educational outcomes** as reflected by international educational assessments. Project 2 consisted on **20 case studies of successful schools** in Europe at different educational levels and programmes: pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational training programmes, and special education programmes in regular schools.

PROJECT IDENTITY**Coordinator**

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Website

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Further reading

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