ORGANISATION OF PROVISION TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Framework for information collection to review the quality of support in inclusive settings

Introduction

The questionnaire designed to collect information from member countries about how education systems are organised and structured at national and local levels to better support all learners in inclusive settings, included a question in relation to quality indicators. Countries were asked to provide information about systems in use to monitor and evaluate the quality of support systems for learners, in particular those with disabilities in inclusive settings (including the frequency of evaluations and whether support systems are evaluated as part of the main process for all schools or as a 'stand-alone' task). In the context of the project, the 'support' for learners with disabilities in inclusive settings can be considered with reference to the concepts of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, organisation & management and resources.

The activities of the Organisation of Provision (OoP) project – the research, project visits and seminars – have been designed to investigate in particular, the critical factors that lead to the development of quality provision and systems of support for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. Based on earlier Agency work, the seminars will not develop indicators but will examine the requirements for key areas identified that can form the basis of a practical tool to support self-review and development.

This paper presents a brief summary of the country replies and proposes a framework for information collection for the purpose of reviewing the quality of support in inclusive settings to be discussed in the project seminars.

Country information

Type of systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of support for learners

According to the information provided, all participating counties have a system to monitor and evaluate the educational system at national and/or regional level. Some countries, have indicated that they have in place a permanent way to systematically monitor and evaluate the quality of the education process, including provision for learners with disabilities, and the efficiency of the educational institutions at different levels. In these countries, internal and/or external evaluation is usually carried out on the basis of quality criteria developed to assess different aspects of the education process in educational institutions. In a few countries, the monitoring process is extended to cover from pre-school to further and higher education as well as the transition to the labour market.

Responsibility for the monitoring/evaluation of education provision, including provision and support for learners with disabilities, is usually assigned to a national/regional educational inspectorate, independent institutions on education research, municipalities, schools, etc.

In countries where a monitoring system exists, national education policy sets out the goals of the educational system, including provision for learners with disabilities. Regions, municipalities and schools are responsible for making the goals concrete in their own environment and making their own plans for activities aimed at reaching the national goals. Quality indicators may stem from educational plans and/or research based evidence on several levels of the educational system. In some countries, the monitoring system (inspection), assesses the effort that educational institutions make to ensure that

their learners reach the attainment targets and developmental goals, as well as wider outcomes, including the extent to which provision is 'inclusive'. The monitoring system assesses to what extent different educational institutions comply with quality provision/indicators and the support offered to learners with disabilities, set out by inclusive education legislation, regulations and framework plans.

In many countries, at educational institution level, school leaders, teachers and other professionals, use different assessment procedures and tools, based upon the national criteria/guidance and the school's pedagogical approaches and curriculum, to assess the learners in relation to attainment targets or developmental objectives. This may include the use of tests/examinations (during which learners may use materials, computer based tests etc., adapted to enable access at individual level). The results of these assessments are usually taken into account by inspections.

In some countries, educational institutions also conduct self-evaluation procedures to monitor the effectiveness of their educational approaches and the quality of the support provided to all learners, including learners with disabilities.

Type of evaluation

With regard to the evaluation of the educational process, many countries have indicated that the system that monitors/evaluates the quality of provision addressed to learners with disabilities in mainstream settings, is part of the general quality assessment of educational institutions by the inspectorate or other entities.

The process may include:

- Evaluation of the organisation and operation of educational institutions and the quality and effectiveness provided

- Evaluation of the education standards

- Evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of programmes for learners with disabilities

- Conduct of assessments of the educational needs of learners

In line with country information, the different educational areas that are monitored, including the quality of provision for learners with disabilities, are very similar to those for general education and may include:

- Equal opportunity and access to education

- Positive school environment/ open school atmosphere (effective educational practices, positive teachers' attitudes, cooperation with the local community)

- Teaching to facilitate learning (methods, materials, IT, differentiated teaching, adapted tests, etc), Teaching must cater for diversity and correspond to the needs and abilities of the individual learner.

- Acquisition of academic and soft skills (curriculum based assessment, on-going formative and summative assessment)

- Use of Individual Educational Plans as the basis for assessment

- Promotion of learners' personal and social development

A previous Agency project on 'Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education (MIPIE) provides further information on which countries have quantitative and qualitative information in different areas.

Frequency of evaluations

Most country replies showed that the different systems that are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the education process, including provision for learners with disabilities, and the efficiency of the educational institutions, take place regularly. In a few countries this takes place on a yearly basis.

Proposals for information collection to review the quality of support in inclusive settings

National/regional education policies and educational institutions set out goals, such as academic, social and personal achievements, improving the quality of life of learners with disabilities and achieving full inclusion and equal opportunities. The systems and the tools/means of assessing the results of on-going work and the achievement of these aims in practice are often not sufficient and cannot adequately address these complex concepts.

The complexity inherent in developing suitable indicators for such concepts has been covered in other Agency projects[1] and will therefore not be discussed in detail here.

The Agency project on 'Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education (MIPIE) suggests that the monitoring of inclusive education needs to consider rights and effectiveness with both quantitative and qualitative indicators in relation to:

- Participation in education and training

- Access to support and accommodation

- Learning success and transition opportunities

- Affiliation opportunities

The report suggests that it is possible to identify key rights issues corresponding with the different phases of the input, process, output/outcomes model:
- Input can be seen to correspond to equity in terms of access for learners with disabilities and their participation in education in inclusive settings. It can refer, for example, to admission information, school organisation, etc;
- Process corresponds to equity in relation to educational opportunities for learners with disabilities and the possibilities within the system to provide them with appropriate support to meet their needs. It can refer, for example, to information on assessment procedures, development of IEP, adaptation of curriculum, involvement of learners in assessment/planning, information on discrimination, participation of parents, etc;

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[1] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed.): Development of a set of indicators – for inclusive education in Europe. Odense 2009 and: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed.): Participation in Inclusive Education – A Framework for Developing Indicators. Odense 2011 and: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed): Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education: Odense 2011.

2 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed): European Patterns of Successful Practice in Vocational Education and Training. Odense 2013.

- Outputs correspond to equity in terms of achievement opportunities and possibilities for success in academic and social learning and in the transition opportunities that are open to learners with disabilities;

- Outcomes correspond to equity in relation to personal autonomy during and after formal education and in particular to the affiliation opportunities open to learners with disabilities that support their inclusion into wider society.

These phases can be considered in relation to the aspects of provision identified for use in the Organisation of Provision project - curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, organisation and management and resources.

Other Agency projects[2], have employed a wider definition of achievement and the results observed in different inclusive settings and also consider effects and impact in order to highlight particular aspects that may assist in identifying or recognising success in any given inclusive setting.

Current work by the Agency on data collection will focus on quantitative input data with regard to equity in terms of access (where learners are placed for their education). It is therefore suggested that the Organisation of Provision project looks more specifically at qualitative information.

The task of information collection to review the quality of support in inclusive settings

This paper provides a framework on information collection to review the quality of support to ensure learner participation in inclusive settings by putting forward some ideas on the basis of previous and current Agency work.

The task of the participants in the working groups is on the basis of their experience of working in the field at national level, to identify the 'requirements' for key areas which should form the focus of any review of the quality of provision/support to learners in mainstream settings.

The outcomes of this session may be used to develop 'quality statements' linked to practice examples from the project, to produce a practical tool to support self-review and on–going development of quality provision and systems of support.

In discussion regarding information collection, it is important consider the following key questions:

- Which information (areas, requirements) in relation to provision offered to learners with disabilities, is of relevance for different stakeholders (policy makers, school/community leaders, teachers, learners, parents, etc)?

- How can such information best be used by different stakeholders to deepen knowledge on the quality of support in inclusive settings and to plan for further development/improvement?

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2   European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed): European Patterns of Successful Practice in Vocational Education and Training. Odense 2013.