

Organisation: Inclusion Europe AISBL, The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Families

Ingrid Körner, president of Inclusion Europe and members of Working Group on Inclusive Education

Inclusion Europe sees education as a key mean to inclusive society, society that is ready to welcome wide diversity of different gifts and abilities. We consider the inclusive school system as the most effective tool for building solidarity among young people with special needs and their peers and also creating a path for better preparation for labor market opportunities.

Question 1: How can school be organised in such a way as to provide all students with the full range of key competences?

- Develop didactics of key competences which could be used across the “traditional” subjects.
- The amount of information is growing and schools should focus on a good basic knowledge whereas the additional knowledge would be attained through project learning and “solving problems “oriented learning.
- Learning in heterogeneous groups is crucial. In order to learn how to act as a team and how to cooperate a special attention should be paid to both, defining the role and experiencing own strengths and weaknesses of each group member.

Question 2: How can schools equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?

- Young people’s learning is successful if they want to learn. Therefore schools have to make young people curious and open-minded. Pupils should experience learning as an exciting process.
- Schools have to provide individual education plans so that every pupil knows that he/she counts and is important for the class, the school, the society.
- Teachers are to provide with skills as: being partner in the learning process (more than being adversary or rival), being able to give lessons using the method of differentiated groups (and not “one size fits all”)
- In order to perceive learning as an ongoing process it is necessary to make study visits in universities, in a variety of adult education centres.
- Parents have to exemplify lifelong learning through their own life. They must support the teacher’s activities (not controvert)

Question 3: How can school system contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?

- The school system has to adapt to the rapidly evolving world e.g. to include facilities of ICT in education
- The curriculum has to be adapted regularly e.g. include the globalisation and its interconnection between the development of each country. Make the subject of economy compulsory to the higher grades.
- Make pupils interested in lifelong learning

Question 4: How can school system best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?

- The curriculum has to include education of ethical values and its interconnection to daily life of each pupil. (e.g. human dignity, value of individual life, equality in diversity, etc)
- Training of teachers, pupils and parents to tolerate and experience diversity as enrichment.
- To implement the individual education plan compulsory for every pupil. In this way he/she learns that everybody is important and everybody is able to contribute to society. The value of a person is a value in itself and does not correspond neither to a social affiliation of an ethnical group nor the level of abilities of a person.
- As parents are an important partner for their children and for the schools they have to be included in the school system and to be clear in their role, especially in the delivery of the individual education plan.
- Schools have to cooperate with multicultural centres on seminars/festivals specialised on cultural roots of children from minorities and their inclusion. Schools should include pupils with disabilities (see above).
- School cultural programs, newspapers, etc. should pay attention to all minorities attending particular school.
- Schools should be encouraged to take part in exchange programmes with schools from other continents or to support these schools.

Question 5: If schools are to respond to each pupil's individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organisation and roles of teachers?

- Small number of pupils in a classroom (max. 20)
- Necessity of adapting the exercise facilities (books, sheets for training, etc.) to the individual needs of each pupil
- Good methods on how to organise/coordinate a multilevel classroom for each subject
- A Team of one teacher and one assistant per class is crucial. Both have to cooperate and be clear of their role. The training of teachers and their assistants has to ensure that they have good knowledge of methods for teaching children with different backgrounds (ethnical affiliation, kinds of disabilities, learning dysfunctions) Teachers must allow each child to progress in their own rhythm and pace.

- Teacher's role has to vary from teaching basic knowledge in front of the class to the management of learning in projects or groups.
- Very important is the parents' role and attitude. Parents of children with different background have to be educated in openness and tolerance. They have to learn that children from other ethnical groups or with/without disabilities are in no way a threat to the own child.

Question 6: How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?

- See answers above
- To create a subject on "citizenship" (could be linked to the subject on "social skills") in order to learn how the society works, what are our rights and obligations, where to look for help and how to influence our environment.
- Create
 - voluntary programs (might be after school activity) in close cooperation with NGOs and centres for social services or therapists:
 - courses for "victims" of bullying in order to strengthen them, make them more assertive, to find out more about the reason of their weakness and the relation between victim and aggressor.
 - close cooperation with centres for drugs addicted people in order to learn more about the reasons of addiction
 - seminars on mentality and rules of groups/gangs, learn how to say "no" to my gang, what are the consequences, dependency vs. self-determination

Question 7: How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?

- See answers above
- Restructure the programme at universities and teacher's colleges accordingly to new didactics and methods described above regarding inclusive schools ("How to make the best out of heterogeneous groups")
- Training in methods of positive reaction towards aggression and bullying
- Teachers undertake mutual study visits in their neighbour classes and discuss their experiences
- Open the school to the neighbourhood, invite representatives from companies, crafts enterprises, etc. to report on their experiences / study visits in enterprises.
- Training of teachers in the ability of creating a milieu of trust and safety in the classroom.

Question 8: How can school communities best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?

- Give schools a high grade of autonomy in order to create a specific profile. This encourages the staff members to feel responsible.
- Post a reward for the best school in e.g. having (by poll) the lowest rate of pupils feeling excluded, or the highest rate of pupils with the best school reports, the best knowledge in using the internet or for other skills.

The association of Inclusion Europe and its membership would very much appreciate if the EU could support projects for:

- The development of methods for teaching key competences
- Training for teachers in disability issues and methods to teach key competences
- Creating tools and books for inclusive schools with a high level of diversity of children
- NGOs programs for cooperation with schools supporting multicultural events/seminars etc.
- Complementary education/training for teachers on the job.