



WELCOME TO
NERA 2021

3-5 NOVEMBER 2021, ODENSE, DENMARK



DIALOGUES BETWEEN NORTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION : THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

Symposium

Dialogues between Northern and Eastern Europe on the Development of Inclusion

Natallia Bahdanovich Hanssen; The discussant: Mel Ainscow

Theoretical and Practical Perspectives, captures the essence of the content. We want to bring voices from Northern and Eastern Europe together in articulating views on inclusion and inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN). Unfortunately, a research-anchored dialogue between Eastern and Northern Europe is still sparse, but, it has the potential to expand knowledge that can be utilized for implementing expressed global visions and declarations in developing of inclusion and inclusive education for students with SEN. Why are the themes of inclusion and inclusive education for students with SEN relevant? Our argument is based on the assumption that providing education through a lens of inclusion for students with SEN remains a challenge for many countries.

The symposium have potential to provide an entrance to various cultures, as well as in-depth knowledge and an understanding of the uniqueness, sensibility, weaknesses and strengths of other practices. Moreover, diversity of perspectives regarding inclusion and inclusive education for students with SEN, can contribute an additional perspective by bringing new experiences and providing enlightenment for our own conditions.

As such, our aim with this symposium is threefold. First, we intend to highlight, and critically discuss, Northern and Eastern European countries' understanding of, and various approaches to, inclusion and inclusive education for students with SEN. Second, we seek to identify lacunae in the realisation of inclusion and inclusive education in these countries. Third, we wish to initiate a dialogue on elaborating new knowledge, approaches and methods to expand the flexibility and openness necessary to realising inclusion, and the development of inclusive education, in Northern and Eastern Europe. In a broad sense, the symposium encourages dialogue between Northern and Eastern Europe about introducing new aspects into discussions of realising inclusion and developing inclusive education for students with SEN.



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Inclusion and Special Needs Education: Towards a Framework of an Overall Perspective of inclusive special education

Rune Hausstätter; Stine Vik

Drawing on the fundamental elements of special education in relation to inclusion, this paper will focus in two main areas: Two paradigmatic perspectives in special education and defectology as an alternative in inclusive education. A model of different perspectives on special and inclusive education is presented containing four directions for practice and research. Three of these directions has the potential for supporting inclusive education. We claim that the model presented can be used as a tool for analyzing which variable that is dominant in different discussions on special and inclusive education. This model is then linked to Vygotsky's (1993) theories on defectology and the main argument is that defectology can be used to broaden the understanding of inclusive education as a societal approach for quality education.



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A practical–theoretical perspective on the inclusive school in Norway

Mirjam Harkestad Olsen

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the intention to include is revealed in the field of practice in Norway. Norway has high ambitions when it comes to offering an inclusive school, ambitions that are clarified both ideologically and formally. Nevertheless, there appears to be a gap between ideology and how the pupils experience inclusion. The focus group interview is used to give an example of how the field of practice may understand the concept of inclusion. An analysis of the results related to the teachers' narratives on inclusion indicated three main areas: understanding of inclusion, attitudes and the importance of alternative teaching facilities. In an attempt to explain the gap between ideology and experience, this paper discuss two questions in particular: the question of competence and the question of learning.



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The path towards inclusive education In Iceland

Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir

The path Iceland has taken towards inclusive school and education will be explored according to several milestones that have shaped the country's path from 1974 until today. Three types of data were explored: (1) policy documents, such as education acts, national curricula and regulations; (2) selected previous research related to inclusion in Iceland; and (3) selected reports on inclusion in Iceland. The data were analysed with a document analysis. The findings shed light on the inclusive path and milestones in Iceland from 1974 to 2017. The discussion will be according to three elements: 1), some contradictions in the policy documents, 2), some actions and trends that have influenced the process of inclusive education in Iceland, and 3), the main concerns as identified in research papers.



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In Pursuit of the Inclusive School - the case of Finland

Kristina Ström; Christel Sundqvist

This paper explores Finland's way towards the inclusive school . The aim is to investigate the process towards inclusion through the lens of national policy documents for basic education covering the last 40 years. We focus on inclusion as participation and learning in the mainstream, including support systems for learning. Our document analysis reveals contradictory trends in the development towards inclusion. On the one hand, the policy documents convey inclusive values, on the other hand, the implementation of the inclusive school lags behind. The study has contributed to insights into structural and legislative barriers to inclusion. As the Nordic countries struggle towards inclusion, it is of crucial importance to detect such barriers. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how the Nordic welfare states have chosen different paths towards inclusive education.



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Development of special needs education in the Republic of Moldova Paradoxes as to inclusion

Liya Kalinnikova Magnusson; Jeremias Rosenqvist

The research investigation focuses on the Republic of Moldova's (RM) social-cultural origins, and political choices and practice towards inclusion. The current study investigates special needs education (SNE) development through policy reforms in education and practical arrangements between the late 1980s and 2014. This sequence symbolizes borders between two periods of the history of SNE in RM: the Soviet one and the period of Moldovan state independence. The research methodology focuses on the shift to the post-Soviet phase as to the development of SEN within the early phases of RM independence. The main findings are divided into three overarching themes: adoption of the Soviet pattern of SNE; 'endemic stress' of breaking the pattern and paradoxes of resolution.



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CHANGES TOWARDS INCLUSION IN THE LITHUANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Stefanija Alisauskiene; Heidi Katarina Harju-Luukkainen

The aim of this paper is, with the help of secondary data analysis, to reveal some possible changes that have occurred in Lithuania regarding inclusive educational (IE) practices. The data are comprised of educational steering documents and Lithuanian research papers from the last 26-years (between 2010-2015). As a method, content analysis of secondary data was used, and the analyses were conducted on two systemic levels, that of policy and practice. The results find that there was a clear shift of focus from disorder centred approaches towards needs-based education for SEN. However, physical barriers, alongside challenging cultural, attitudinal and institutional barriers, still strongly limit students' access to inclusive education in Lithuania today.



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Teachers' attitudes towards policy and practice of inclusion and inclusive education in Russia

Alexandra Alekseeva; Elena Kutepova; Alexandra Suntsova; Natallia B Hanssen; Heidi Harju-Luukkainen

In Russia, a broader discussion and theoretical development of inclusion and inclusive education began after a reasonably recent adoption of the Federal Law of Education in 2012. However, equal educational opportunities for all are not yet fully provided in practice. The aim of this study is to investigate teachers' attitudes towards inclusion policy, as well as their attitudes towards understanding and readiness to implement inclusive educational practices. The research was conducted through a survey for 2478 teachers from inclusive, special and secondary schools. Five categories emerged regarding teachers' attitudes and understanding of inclusion and inclusive education. Russia needs to develop clearer political aims, values and definitions for inclusion, and the concrete actions to implement an inclusive education should be given greater attention. Increased emphasis should be directed towards teacher preparation.



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Inclusive education in Ukraine - tension between policy and practice

Martynchuk Olena; Skrypnyk Tetiana; Sofiy Natalia; Hanssen Natallia

The purpose of this paper is to examine inclusion and inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN) as conceptualised in Ukraine's educational policy documents. The data consist of national policy documents from 2009 (when inclusive education started to be implemented at the institutional level) to 2019; these documents were analysed using a thematic analysis. The analysis indicated three main themes: incompleteness and controversy in the concept of inclusion; the residue of a medical paradigm in the definition of concept inclusive education and tension and conflict in labelling of the concept of students with SEN. The results point to the necessity of encouraging discussions and reflections and articulating and defining what inclusion is and how Ukraine can create an effective strategy for the development of inclusive education.