MENNTUN FYRIR ALLA Á ÍSLANDI

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ICELAND

Amanda Watkins and Verity Donnelly

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Overview

- Amanda Watkins:

  - Overview of Audit main findings, recommendations and key levers

- Verity Donnelly:

  - The importance of first steps around developing a common understanding of inclusion amongst stakeholders
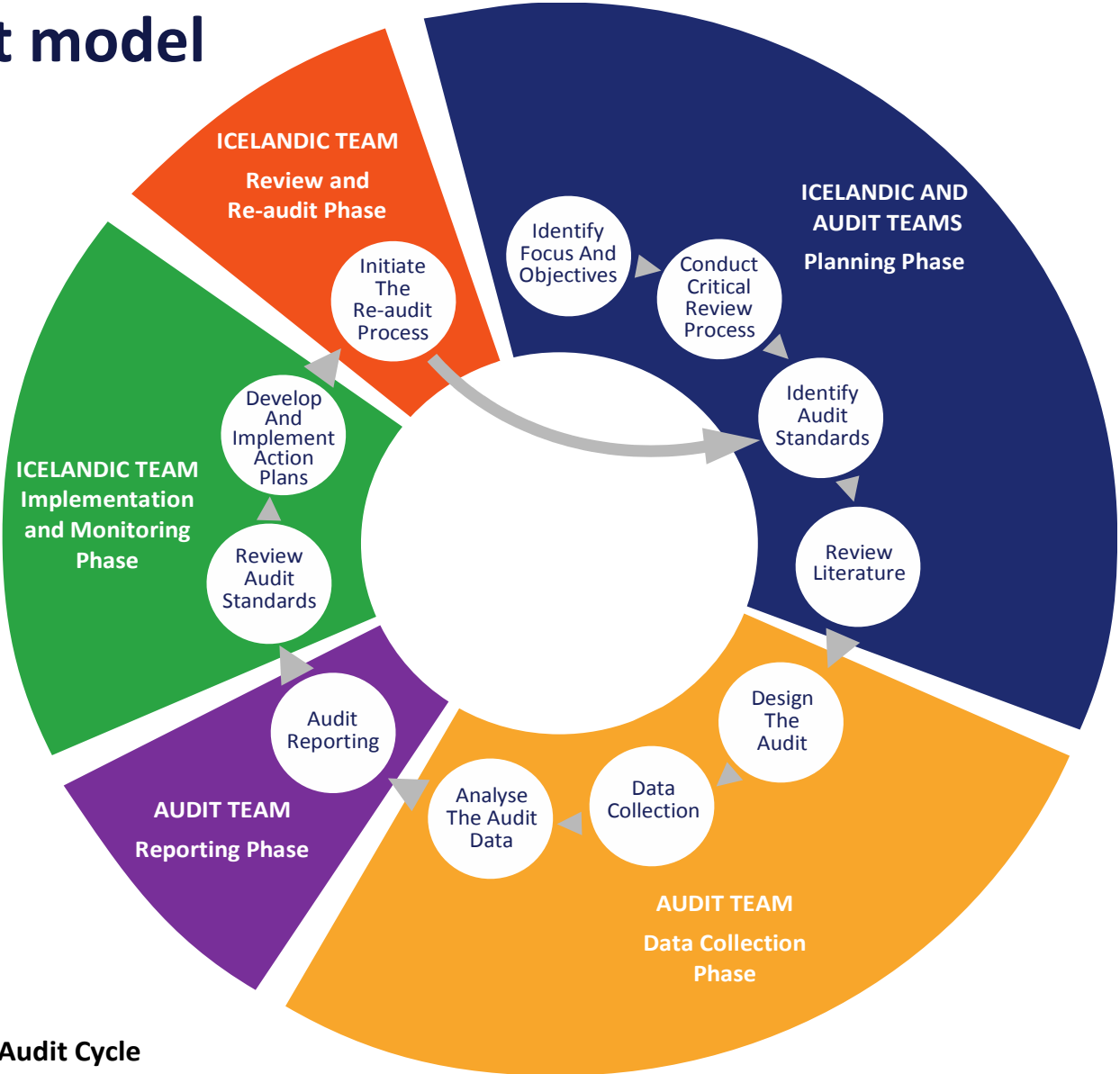
Work on behalf of …

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

- Signatories to the External Audit Memorandum of Understanding:

  1. The Ministry of Welfare

  2. The Icelandic Association of Local Authorities

  3. The Teachers' Union

  4. The National Home and School Association

  5. The Head Teachers' Union of Upper-Secondary Schools

Working with stakeholders from …

- Pre-school through to the end of upper secondary education

- All responsible funding bodies involved in inclusive education i.e. the municipalities; the Ministries of Education, Science and Culture; Health and Welfare; and the Interior (Municipalities Equalisation fund)

- Learners and their families; school staff; support services; school funders and operators; national teacher organisations and teacher education institutions; local and national level decision-makers

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Standards-based Audit model

The Audit Cycle

ICELANDIC TEAM
Review and Re-audit Phase

Initiate The Re-audit Process

ICELANDIC AND AUDIT TEAMS
Planning Phase

Identify Focus And Objectives

Conduct Critical Review Process

Identify Audit Standards

Review Literature

Develop And Implement Action Plans

ICELANDIC TEAM
Implementation and Monitoring Phase

Review Audit Standards

Audit Reporting

AUDIT TEAM
Reporting Phase

Analyse The Audit Data

Data Collection

Design The Audit

AUDIT TEAM
Data Collection Phase

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Strengths within the system

- Stakeholders share the view that inclusive education is an important goal for economic and social well-being in Iceland

- There is a strong foundation of legislation and policy that is in line with international conventions relating to learners' rights

- All stakeholder groups – including parents – recognise the benefits of the curriculum framework built upon 'pillars' that encourage cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning

- The degree of system flexibility means that there are opportunities for schools to innovate as well as develop and deliver 'joined-up' initiatives
- Iceland's general education system is relatively well-resourced - expenditure on education is higher than in other OECD countries
- There is a comprehensive framework of criteria for quality education for use in internal and external evaluation in compulsory schools
- There is widespread understanding among school, local and national-level stakeholders that staff professional development is perhaps the most critical lever for improving the quality of inclusive education in Iceland

Evaluation of the Standards and Descriptors

- 7 Descriptors were identified as being at the stage of *to be initiated* (2.3, 3.9, 4.3, 4.8, 4.9, 5.2, 6.5)

- 31 Descriptors were identified as *requiring development*

- 1 Descriptor was identified as being *fully embedded* in policy and practice across schools, age phases and municipalities (2.1)

- All seven Standards overall were identified *as requiring development*

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Recommendations linked to 7 Standards

1. Inclusive education is defined by all stakeholders as an approach for improving the quality of education of all learners

Ensure that all stakeholders understand inclusive education as the basis for high-quality education for all learners

2. Legislation and policy for inclusive education has the goal of promoting equal opportunities for all learners

In light of the shared dialogue, ensure that legislation and national and local-level policy promote a rights-based approach to inclusive education

3. Policy for inclusive education is effectively implemented at all levels

Within the policy framework for inclusive education at national and local levels, embed governance and quality assurance mechanisms that support effective implementation at all system levels

4. All stakeholders, at all levels are enabled to think and act inclusively in their daily practice

To support the effective implementation of policy at all system levels, develop flexible resource allocation mechanisms that increase the system's capacity to be inclusive

5. Resource allocation is equitable, efficient and cost-effective

Build the capacity of support systems at all levels to provide inclusive learning environments through an integrated continuum of support and resources
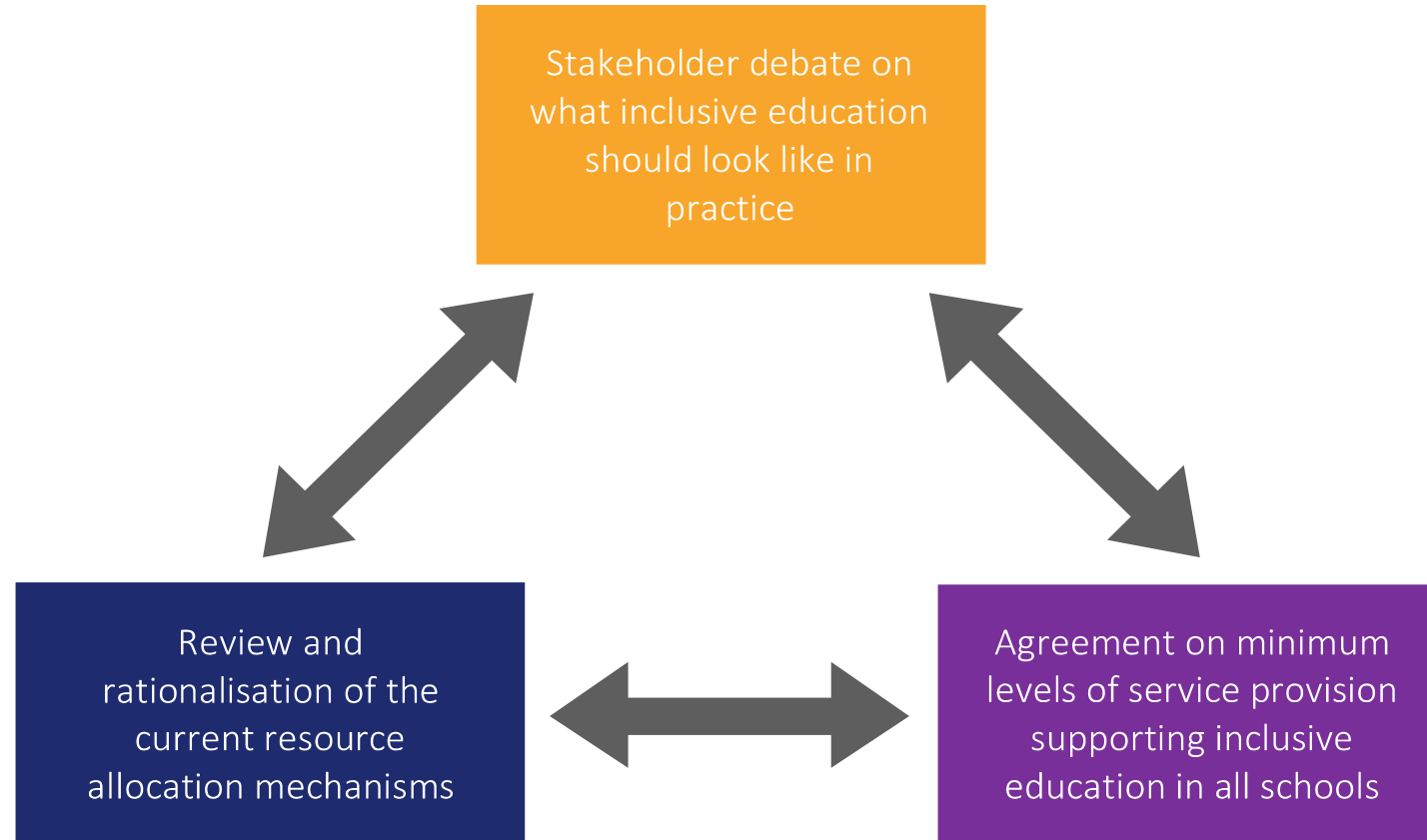
6. Professional development issues at all system levels are effectively addressed
Develop initial and continuing professional training opportunities that are aligned with national and local level policy goals and school development plans to support the ability of all stakeholders to effectively develop inclusive practice

7. Governance and quality assurance mechanisms ensure co-ordinated and effective implementation of inclusive education policy and practice
Develop the capacity of all pre-, compulsory and upper-secondary school stakeholders to think and act inclusively in their daily practice and build inclusive learning communities

Three inter-connected critical levers

Stakeholder debate on what inclusive education should look like in practice

Review and rationalisation of the current resource allocation mechanisms

Agreement on minimum levels of service provision supporting inclusive education in all schools

Three inter-connected critical levers for system development

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Review and rationalisation of the current resource allocation mechanisms with a view to improving effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

The widespread agreement on the need for change to existing resource allocation mechanisms should be built upon. Stakeholders across all system levels are clear that there should be a shift away from resource allocation based on the identification of individual learners' SEN (a mainly input model), to more flexible resourcing that allows schools to support all learners' needs in more responsive ways (towards a throughput model)

Initiate discussions leading to the agreement of minimum levels of service provision for supporting inclusive education in all schools

There are inequities within the availability of support and provision across regions, local communities, school phases and individual schools. Stakeholders at all levels are requesting more guidance on the minimum levels of service provision that should be used to inform the implementation of policy for inclusive education within all schools and local contexts

Initiate a widespread stakeholder debate on what inclusive education should look like in practice across all municipalities, school phases and schools

With a focus on:

- operational definitions to be used

- outcome and process goals to be worked towards

- mechanisms and criteria for identifying progress towards the agreed goals

- benchmarks and milestones indicating successful policy implementation

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Overview of presentation

- Developing a shared understanding of inclusion

- Importance of terminology

- Thinking about change

- What does success look like?

- The Eco-system – bringing it all together!

Developing a shared understanding of inclusion

Audit Findings

- High level of understanding of underpinning issues and importance of IE for economic and social well-being

- Consensus around policy goals

- View of whole school approach involving all learners

Moving forward

- Agreement on terms and meanings

- Closing gap between ideology and practice

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Definitions of Inclusion

- as a concern with disabled/others categorized as having SEN

- as a response to disciplinary exclusion

- in relation to all groups seen as vulnerable to exclusion

- as developing the school for all

- as education for all

- as a principled approach to education and society

Ainscow et al., 2006

Discussion point!

Take 5 minutes to talk to your neighbour(s) and consider:

a. Which definition most closely reflects your own view of inclusion?

b. Which definition best reflects the current national context?

c. Which definition would you like to see as a goal for the future?

The importance of terminology

Moving on from:

- Re-labelling special education

- placement

- ideology

The importance of terminology

Moving forward

- Open discussion about **rights** of children and young people to education and WITHIN education and how schools can develop to improve the participation, learning and achievement of all learners

- Commitment to key values e.g. equity, community, respect for diversity, entitlement …

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

What change do we want to see?

- Identify key outcomes for different stakeholder groups

- Consider what structures/processes might bring about these outcomes

- What works well currently? What needs to be changed or abandoned?

- Introduce small, focused innovations to bring about change and increase capability

- Carry out evaluation and further reflection from more informed perspective

What does 'success' look like?

- Organise collaborative work with full range of partners to develop success criteria/quality indicators for each area of work

- Exemplars/descriptors of effective practice /promising approaches (evidence-informed)

e.g. UNESCO – A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education (2017)

The Ecosystem model
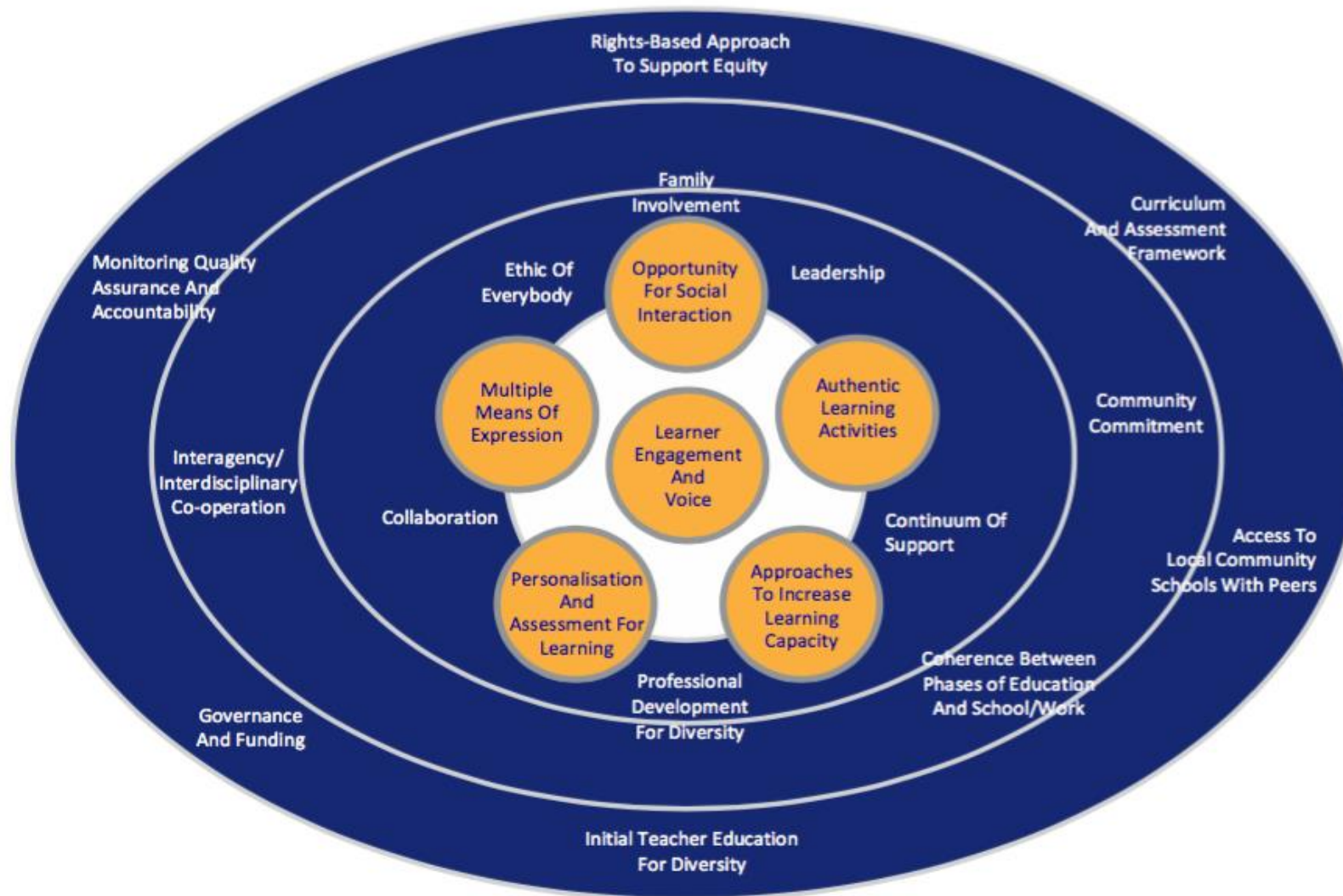
Rights within education….

- To have a voice in decisions affecting learning

- To be taught by a qualified teacher using a range of approaches

- To play an active part in assessment and planning next steps

- To have equitable opportunities to participate in activities with meaningful ways to receive, process information and express themselves (UDL)

- To engage in social interaction

- To access a rich curriculum and wider activities

The 3 worlds of the classroom

- Public world – teacher sees and manages through routines/learning activities (teacher directed and learner selected)

- Semi-private world of peer relationships – social roles/status with own rules and customs (learner designed activities and spontaneous peer talk)

- Private world of child's mind – where knowledge and beliefs change and grow – across all aspects of child life.

Engaging with peer culture…

Inclusive pedagogy

- Teaching approaches that account for difference – a belief that the capacity to learn is transformable (Hart et al. 2004)

- Moving from offering one opportunity to learn to most children with something different for some – to extending choices for everybody to engage in authentic learning

- Re-thinking traditional 'silos' of professional responsibility – work with specialists to find new ways to provide meaningful learning experiences for all (Florian and Spratt, 2014)

- Supporting learners to take an active part in assessment for learning as route to personalisation

- Making the most of social interaction

Who will be the better driver?

The key role of leadership

- Provides influence and direction

- Attends to equity and excellence

- Secures positive outcomes for ALL learners

- Establishes a vision and purpose that reflects priorities on which they can be judged

Leaders…

…engage in dialogue, examine current practice, and create pedagogical conversations and communities that critically build on, and do not devalue, students' lived experiences … [they take] account of the ways in which the inequities of the outside world affect the outcomes of what occurs internally in educational organisations. (Shields, 2010)

Equality vs. Equity

In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same support. This illustrates equal opportunities.

In the second image, individuals receive different support to give them equitable access to the game. This illustrates equitable opportunity.

In the third image, all three can see the game. There is no need for any support or accommodation as the cause of the inequity has been addressed and the barrier to equitable opportunity has been removed. This follows the principle of universal design.

© European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Leaders…

- Create an 'ethic of everybody' and examine relationships, structures and processes that might lead to inequity or lack of opportunities for all learners

- Review resource allocation and use, learners' access to staff expertise, learners access to the curriculum and wider activities and to accreditation and recognition of on-going progress, learning and success

- Evaluate innovations and support evidence-informed practice

- Oversee a continuum of support for learners - being proactive, flexible, avoiding labels

Leaders…

- Work to involve parents/families in their child's learning, increasing aspirations

- Make strong links to the local community bringing in different expertise to broaden the curriculum and increase relevance

- Support teacher professional learning regarding curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, community – also factors such as competence, engagement, relationships (Hart et al. 2004)

Local structures

- **Coherence between phases of education and work/school** – curriculum and pedagogy that attend to progression and continuity and support smooth transitions

- **Interagency and interdisciplinary co-operation –** services from all disciplines should work together to support learners and increase the capacity of the school/community

- **Community commitment** – to quality education for all children together, inclusion as part of the school improvement agenda.

National structures

Rights-based legislation and policy to support equity. This should be the result of a long-term view from politicians, following a national dialogue to secure conceptual clarity around inclusive education, equity - and raising the achievement of all learners.

Curriculum and assessment framework. All learners should have access to a coherent framework as a basis for relevant (valued) learning and appropriate recognition of achievement.

Access to the local community school with peers. All learners should attend their local school with their peer group.

National structures

Governance and funding. Clarity is needed around roles/responsibilities with funding to increase system capacity and support equity.

Initial teacher education for diversity. Initial teacher education should develop appropriate competences in all teachers to equip them to work in diverse classrooms.

Monitoring - quality assurance and accountability (efficiency, cost effectiveness and focus on equity). There should be agreed standards for quality education that include multiple success measures - so that stakeholders are held accountable for outcomes that matter and impact on learner achievement.

Contact

www.european-agency.org

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Østre Stationsvej 33, DK-5000 Odense C, Denmark

secretariat@european-agency.org
Tel.: +45 64 41 00 20

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union