



Inclusive Education for Students with Disability

A review of the best evidence in relation to theory and practice



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A What Works for Kids Evidence Review

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Disclaimer: Data reported and the subsequent analyses are based on information gleaned from a variety of sources. The authors have not attempted to validate these data and are unable to vouch for the authenticity of them. While all attempts have been made to include reference only to published sources through reputable journals, government publications, internationally accepted authorities, and education system websites, the authors are not responsible for any misrepresentations obtained directly from these sources.

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Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Inclusive education has been identified as a focus area for investigation, toward exploring what research has been found to work in improving not only school attendance but also school achievement and other learning outcomes for students with disability. This report presents an overview of inclusive education in an international and Australian context. It provides an analysis of the current provision of inclusive education in the Australian government school sector, and will be complemented by a further review than analyses the current provision of inclusive education in the Australian non-government school sector.

This report identifies research and evidence-based literature regarding outcomes of inclusive education for students with disability internationally, and specifically within Australia. An analysis and policy discussion is included of this evidence in regard to three key research questions:

1. How is Australia sitting internationally in relation to the extent students with disability or additional learning needs can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability?
2. What are the Australian and international policies (that is the possibilities) for improving learning outcomes for students with disability or additional learning needs?
3. What programs are currently being implemented and what learning needs are they attempting to meet?

To answer these questions data was obtained from a wide variety of key published sources including reputable peer reviewed journals, publicly available government publications, internationally accepted authorities and Australian education system websites. In excess of 150 individual data sources were reviewed, which form part of this synthesis.

Australia, like most countries, views inclusion as a disability issue, with almost all regions maintaining some form of separate special education. Australia has joined other countries in a global effort to promote equal and active participation of all people with disability, with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2008. In relation to education, the Convention states that persons with disability should be guaranteed the right to inclusive education at all levels, regardless of age, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. Australia's commitment is also reflected in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and in the establishment of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) that clarify and elaborate on legal obligations associated with inclusive education. All education providers are required to be aware of and implement the Standards to enable students with disability receive an education equal to that of any other student. The Government is, nonetheless, explicit in their support for inclusive education through policy that recognises the need for

interdisciplinary engagement and the provision of additional resourcing. In all regions, teachers are seen as needing better preparation for inclusive education.

Inclusive education is, nevertheless, a contentious term that lacks a tight conceptual focus, which may contribute to its misconception and confused practice. International human rights agreements, covenants, and legislation, provide definitions of inclusion that focus on equity, access, opportunity and rights. These features are interpreted into practice with definitions that conceptualise inclusion education into two broad ways; 1. based on key features and 2. the removal of that which excludes and marginalises. In the absence of a unified definition of what inclusion is, attempts to measure or compare such a complex equity issue are challenging.

The international evidence indicates that good practice in inclusive education involves consideration of a range of aspects. The key approaches adopted in Australia focus on whole-school practice and in-class support. At a whole, school level good practices include adjustments to cultures, policies, and practices, development of support structures, regimes of funding support, and the provision of and access to equitable learning opportunities. At an in-class level, differentiating curriculum or introducing alternative curricula, the application of universal design, use of information technologies, individual planning through the individual education plan (IEP), and a focus on quality teaching for all students are the most prominent practices. Nonetheless, there is a lack of evidence-based data on the impact of these practices on changes in learning outcomes for students with disability.

All Australian jurisdictions have inclusive policies and firmly established structures for supporting students with disability, with detailed and quite complex procedures for identifying eligibility of students and the provision of support required. All use a needs-based approach and offer support at different levels through elaborately articulated frameworks. In-school support varies but can be provided through additional staffing, via multidisciplinary teams and through special programs. A lack of consistency across jurisdictions in measuring outcomes makes it difficult to ascertain with any consistency on whether appropriate progress is being made by students with varying levels of disability and the outcomes of those students.

Students with disability are seen as being under-represented in national and state testing and accountability measures. The reporting of educational outcomes is inconsistent and does not necessarily reflect the 'value' that the students may have gained from their schooling. Thus, the standard of accountability for students with disability may be substantially less than for other students.

This report elaborates on these policies, programs and approaches, before a number of suggestions for moving inclusive education forward in Australia are presented.

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Background: Inclusive education definitions, concepts and measures

Key points: Definitions, concepts and measures

- Inclusive education lacks a tight conceptual focus that may contribute to its misconception and often confused practices.
- International human rights agreements, covenants, and legislation, provide definitions that focus on equity, access, opportunity, and rights.
- Inclusion is interpreted into practice with definitions that conceptualise inclusion from two broad categories: 1. its key features and 2. the removal of that which excludes and marginalises.
- Definitions assume a set of commonalities that are static but in reality these are continually impacted by changing educational practice, context, culture, and situation.
- In the absence of a unified definition of what inclusion is, attempts to measure or compare such a complex equity issue are challenging.
- Measures need to involve consideration at three levels: 1. macro (government and state), 2. meso (schools and communities) and 3. micro (individual classrooms and people).
- Most systems adopt a whole-school approach with instruments designed to measure areas associated with access, support, policy, curriculum, pedagogy, quality teaching, and assessment of achievement.

Definitions of inclusion

Inclusive education is a contentious term that lacks a tight conceptual focus, which may contribute to some misconception and confused practice. In relation to students with disability, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) first stated in 1994 that inclusive schools were the most effective way to counter discriminatory approaches and attitudes towards students. International legislation and policy subsequently evolved to challenge exclusionary practices and focus attention on equity and access to high-quality education for all, while respecting diversity (UNESCO, 2008). According to UNESCO (2009) "... an 'inclusive' education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive – in other words, if they become better at educating all children in their communities (p. 8)". Article 24 of the UN *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* recognises that education should be accessible "... without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity ... within an inclusive education system at all levels ...". It is widely acknowledged, nonetheless, that children with disability continue to experience different forms of exclusion which vary depending upon their disability, domicile, and the culture or class to which they belong (UNICEF, 2013).

Inclusion in education is recognised as a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Interpretation of inclusive education is, however, an increasingly contentious term that challenges educators and educational systems to think about the work of teaching and learning in different ways and from varied perspectives. According to Grima-Farrell, Bain and McDonagh (2011, p. 118), "Inclusive education represents a whole-school concern and works to align special education with general education in a manner that most effectively and efficiently imparts quality education to all students".

The issue of equity has been a major force internationally, underpinning the movement towards a more inclusive educational system and the way in which inclusion is defined (Forlin, 2012). Loreman (2009) argues "...the majority of educators know very well what inclusion is, but it is sometimes politically expedient for them to manipulate the term to suit whatever practice they happen to be currently engaged in, be it inclusive or not" (p. 43). It is also possible that the lack of a tight conceptual focus that inclusive education suffers from may have contributed to misconception and confused practices (Berlach & Chambers, 2011). In the words of Graham and Jahnukainen (2011), "While some might say that we have witnessed the 'globalisation of inclusion', questions remain as to what has spread" (p. 263).

Scholars, practitioners, governments, and organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF have also provided conceptualisations and definitions of inclusive education. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006), for example, propose a typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion that considers inclusion: as a concern with students with disability having special educational needs; as a response to disciplinary exclusion; in relation to all groups being vulnerable to exclusion; as developing the school for all; as education for all; and as a principled approach to education and society.

International human rights agreements, covenants and legislation, thus, provide definitions that are critical for understanding and implementing inclusion as these often bind all signatories and flow on to influence national legislation.

Concepts of inclusion

Based on analysis of all of these sources, definitions can be broadly grouped into two categories: conceptualising inclusive education based on key features (for example, Berlach & Chambers, 2011), and conceptualising inclusive education as the removal of that which excludes and marginalises (for example, Slee 2011).

Conceptualising inclusive education based on key features

The most prevalent education conceptualisations are those that define inclusion based on certain key features and characteristics such as age-appropriate placement and students being able to attend their local school. Berlach and Chambers (2011) provide a philosophical framework for inclusive education along with school-based and classroom-based examples. Their philosophical underpinnings include: availability of opportunity;

acceptance of disability and / or disadvantage; superior ability and diversity; and an absence of bias, prejudice, and inequality. Hall (1996, cited in Florian, 2005) notes that inclusion means "Full membership of an age-appropriate class in your local school doing the same lessons as other pupils and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school" (p. 31). Other definitions refer to the presence of community (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992), 'ordinary' schools expanding what they do (Clark et al., 1995), problem solving (Rouse & Florian, 1996), and responsiveness to student needs via curriculum organisation and provision (Ballard, 1995).

Loreman (2009) provides a synthesis of the features of inclusive education evident in a variety of sources situated firmly in this key features category. These features include:

- All children attend their neighbourhood school.
- Schools and districts have a 'zero-rejection' policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region. All children are welcomed and valued.
- All children learn in regular, heterogeneous classrooms with same-age peers.
- All children follow substantively similar programs of study, with curriculum that can be adapted and modified if needed. Modes of instruction are varied and responsive to the needs of all.
- All children contribute to regular school and classroom learning activities and events.
- All children are supported to make friends and to be socially successful with their peers.
- Adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion (Loreman, 2009, p. 43).

Attempts to define inclusive education by what it is, however, are problematic because such definitions can be impacted by shifts in educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance that can quickly render these features irrelevant and outdated. Such definitions tend to assume that educational practice is subject to a set of commonalities that are static across time and place, but this is not the case. For example, in many rural areas of the world where the 'one room schoolhouse' still exists, the criteria of children being educated with their same-age peers might not factor into a definition of inclusion.

Conceptualising inclusive education as the removal of that which excludes and marginalises

Some inclusive education scholars, such as Mittler (2012) and Ainscow and colleagues (see for example Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2011), conceptualise the task of inclusion as being that which identifies and removes barriers to participation in education. Indeed Slee (2011) and Graham and Slee (2008) go as far as to suggest that the special school-regular school dichotomy is no longer a useful way of framing education, and that barriers that exist in both sectors need to be removed so as to produce what is, in the end, unlike either (that is, they suggest the 'irregular school'). According to Slee (2011), the irregular school is neither a special nor a 'regular' school, but one which has been re-envisioned and restored with a view to eliminating barriers to inclusion in an anticipatory

way. He states that "Reforming education is a manifold and complex task that reaches into the deep structures of education and schooling to produce different policies, practices and cultures." (Slee, 2011, p. 164). Macedo (2013), though, has further argued that international policies like the US No Child Left Behind Act (2001) create artificial lines, but that the very idea of inclusion is to blur lines and to develop education committed to the uniqueness of students.

Extensive literature has identified potential barriers to inclusion. For example, in a wide ranging review of practices in Australia, Shaddock (2006) concluded that barriers perceived by teachers include:

- a lack of time;
- difficulty in individualising within a group;
- inadequate training and resources;
- a lack of school support; and
- views that adjusting for some students (a) compromises the learning of others; (b) draws negative attention to student differences; and / or (c) fails to prepare students for the 'real world'.

A further challenge that continues to create significant barriers to inclusion is the attitude of society (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; 2011). Australia is a nation of diverse cultures and ethnic groups with diverse understandings of disability that may inform attitudes towards inclusion.

So far, inclusion has been presented through a disability lens. Inclusion should, however, not be seen as an issue solely about students with disability. Finley Snyder (1999, in Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorcelli, and Arthur-Kelly, 2009), observes that the "inclusion movement has primarily been a special education movement" (p. 174), and as such, it is easy to fall into thinking that it is only about children with disability. The impetus for inclusion has, indeed, come from outside of the mainstream; from those who have been traditionally excluded. Many, however, now view inclusive education as being concerned with diversity more generally. According to Shaddock and colleagues (2009), inclusion implies that if participation becomes an issue for any student, whether arising from disability, gender, behaviour, poverty, culture, refugee status or any other reason, the desirable approach is not to establish special programs for the newly identified individual or group need, but to expand mainstream thinking, structures, and practices so that all students are accommodated.

When inclusion is seen as a disability issue and not as a whole-of-school issue, inclusive education becomes a code for 'special education' and as such can work against inclusive practice, with certain individuals and groups of children becoming pathologised in the eyes of educators. An expanded view of inclusive education allows it to be seen as a human rights issue, with marginalised and excluded groups being discriminated against and denied what is readily available to others in the mainstream. Inclusion, thus, requires "... a focus on all policies and processes within an education system, and indeed, all pupils who may experience exclusionary pressures" (Ainscow, Farrell & Tweddle, 2000, p. 228). Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006, p. 15), in advocating a broader understanding

of inclusion, write “We question the usefulness of an approach to inclusion that, in attempting to increase the participation of students, focuses on the ‘disabled’ or ‘special needs’ part of them and ignores all the other ways in which participation for *any student* may be impeded or enhanced (italics added).”

It may, therefore, be that neither of the two categories above in isolation is adequate in providing a good conceptual definition of inclusive education. Attempts to define what inclusive education is are problematic, because they may fail to take into account a variety of context-dependent features. Attempts to conceptualise inclusion as the removal of that which excludes and marginalises are problematic because barriers may vary enormously between jurisdictions, cultures, and contexts and this description fails to adequately describe what an inclusive setting might actually be. Consequently, it is not surprising that there is difficulty picturing what inclusion looks like in practice.

Considering international agreements are fundamental drivers and definers of inclusive education for most regions, the definition of inclusion adopted for this review will be from UNESCO. This is proposed as the most defensible definition on which this report is grounded, as it is consistent with conceptualisations in the literature and has broad international agreement:

Education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education, as well as in removing those barriers and obstacles that lead to exclusion. (UNESCO, 2012, para.1)

This definition purports an education-for-all approach in which inclusive practice is generally seen as having a broader focus than just disability (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). The terms of reference for this report, however, relate to students with disability, thus the focus for much of the remainder of the report is on this specific group of students.

Measuring inclusive education

Berlach and Chambers (2011) describe the initial step to inclusive education as having “...an accurate understanding of ‘what is’ ... in preparing for ‘what may be’ on a much broader scale” (p. 52). To do this, it follows that it is essential to be able to measure inclusive education. Not dissimilar to IQ tests that purport to measure intelligence in the absence of an agreed upon definition of what that is, inclusive education measurement instruments are forced to provide their own definition of inclusion (or at least make it implicit in the criteria used) before providing areas for examination.

Following the above definition of inclusion from UNESCO (2012) used in this report, schools must be ready to both accept students with diverse needs as well as to behave in proactive ways to eliminate barriers to enable full participation. Schools must adopt the features of inclusion, while at the same time be prepared to dismantle mechanisms and practices leading to exclusion (Forlin, 2013a). Measuring, therefore, involves reviewing

inclusion from the perspective of a whole-school approach such as proffered by the UNICEF definition of "Inclusion is really about how well child-friendly schools are doing at making practical changes so that all children, regardless of their background or ability, can succeed" (2010, p. 31). Winter and O'Raw (2010) list 10 themes associated with inclusive education:

1. Provision of information
2. Physical features
3. Inclusive school policies
4. The IEP
5. Student interactions
6. Staffing and personnel
7. External links
8. Assessment of achievement
9. Curriculum
10. Teaching strategies.

A variety of measures of these features of inclusion have been developed. Possibly the most widely cited measuring instrument is Booth and Ainscow's (2002) *Index for Inclusion* (Revised 2011). The *Index*, developed in the UK, was validated for use in a small number of Western Australian schools in 2001, and provides a series of research-based indicators of inclusion and is designed for use at the school level through a process of self-reviews (see Appendix A for details and examples of indicators). Its use has been extensively reported throughout the world and it has been translated into at least 22 different languages and modified according to various international contexts (EENET, n.d.).

There is evidence noting some difficulties, though, associated with using the *Index* in schools, especially in regards to a lack of capacity for self-review by school staff (Heung, 2006). It was concluded that due to the comprehensive nature of the *Index* and the time necessary for staff to effectively use it that:

Based on the trial of the *Index for Inclusion* in Western Australian schools, it would seem that dissemination of the *Index for Inclusion* without a clearly developed professional development process to ensure its use is likely to be given little more than token acknowledgment by schools (Forlin, 2004, p. 201).

It has, however, been found useful in "...interrogating the fine grain of culture building that goes on in schools through pedagogy, curriculum, school and classroom organisation and the character of decision making and so on" (Slee, 2006, p. 114). The *Index* was also employed to enhance the development of a learning community of educators in Education Queensland. The *Index* was modelled as a tool to prompt reflective discussion for teachers aiming to incorporate inclusive education values, indicators, and questions into their action plans (Duke, 2009). It would seem that as a tool to be used during structured professional learning opportunities the *Index* provides a comprehensive measure. However, the value of it for schools without a critical friend to facilitate dialogue may be limited.

Another important instrument for measuring inclusive education has been devised by Kyriazopoulou and Weber (2009), who suggest the use of an input-processes-outcomes model as indicated in Figure 1. The input-processes-output model evaluates inclusive education based on what is available to support it, what happens during the implementation phase, and what the end result is. Critically, Kyriazopoulou and Weber (2009) also suggest that inclusive education systems need to be measured on three levels: macro (large scale such as school jurisdiction, nations, regions), meso (schools and groups of schools along with local communities), and micro (individual classrooms and people). Kyriazopoulou and Weber (2009) provide a set of criteria, consistent with their model that can be used to assist in measuring inclusive education.

More recently, a review of the literature by Loreman (2013) ascertained possible outcomes for measuring inclusive education. This process yielded a number of themes leading to outcomes grouped into the three macro, meso, and micro levels suitable for measuring inclusive education. Loreman cautions, however, that many of the international scholars consulted as part of this review process expressed doubt that any set of outcomes or indicators, however good, would be adequate for the task of measuring inclusive education. Nevertheless, themes from which outcomes could be derived were identified, along with specific outcomes for Alberta, Canada. These themes have international relevance and are outlined in Table 1.

Like conceptualisations of inclusive education, efforts to measure inclusion are complicated by differing perspectives and a lack of agreed viewpoints and criteria

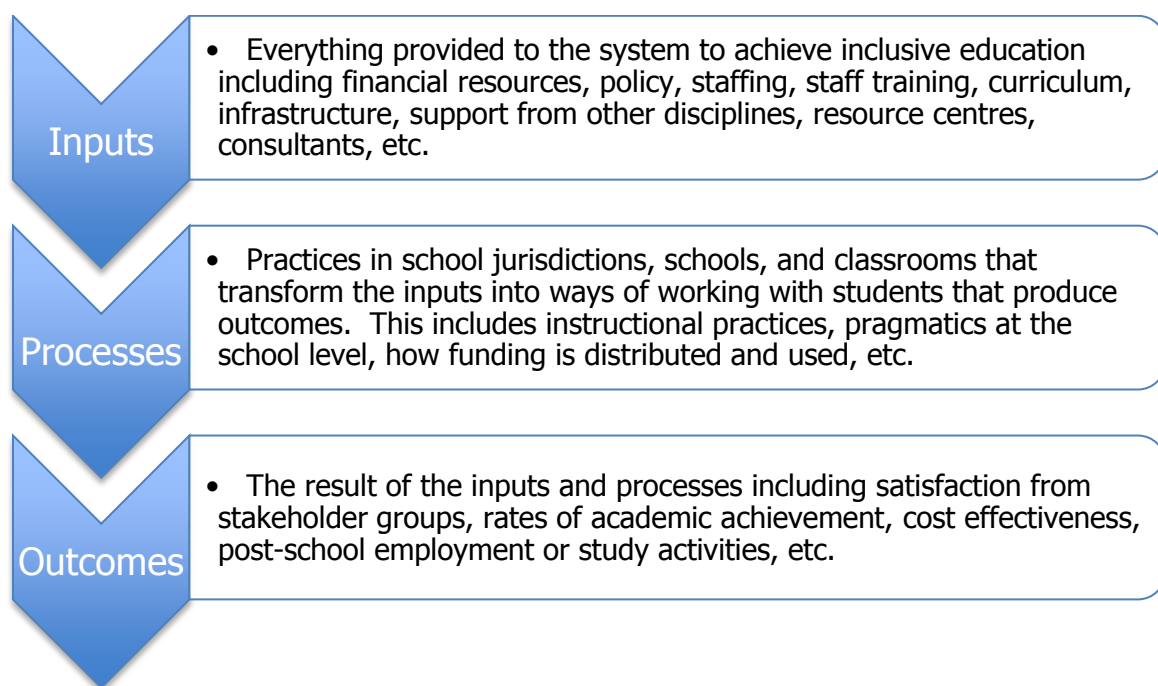


Figure 1 *The inputs-processes-outcomes model based on Kyriazopoulou and Weber (2009) and presented in Loreman (2013)*

A broad and varied methodological approach is, thus, essential in evaluating an inclusive education system and / or inclusive practice in schools and classrooms. To achieve this most systems adopt a whole-school approach by measuring aspects of access, support, policy, curriculum, pedagogy, quality teaching, and assessment of achievement.

In response to being signatories to international conventions, governments are required to give assurances that disability and diversity are being addressed, especially within an inclusive educational domain (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011). Yet as has been posited, measuring outcomes achieved by inclusion is multi-faceted. For example, there have been many contextual challenges and complexities faced in Australian school settings in the identification of evidence-based practice for inclusion (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008). Even in a well-developed country such as Australia, "It is difficult to develop sophisticated policy approaches to address complex equity issues when education discourse is simplified" (Reid, 2011, p. 4). Indeed, there has been very little in the way of developing Australian measures of inclusion, with the exception of a scale developed by Deppeler and Harvey (2004) that condensed Booth and Ainscow's *Index* and adapted it to the Australian context.

Many models of teacher quality, both in Australia and internationally, include criteria relevant to inclusive teaching. For example, in Alberta, Canada, to qualify for initial teacher certification a teacher must understand that:

... all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn. They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs (Government of Alberta, 1997, section e).

Inputs	Processes	Outcomes
Policy	Climate	Participation
Staff professional development and teacher education	School practices	Student achievement
Resources and finance	Classroom practices	Post-school outcomes
Leadership	Collaboration and shared responsibility	
Curriculum	Supports to individuals	

Table 1 *Themes for developing inclusive education outcomes (Loreman, 2013)*

Similarly, in NSW the Quality Teaching Model has an inclusive education component requiring teachers to ensure that “Lessons include and publicly value the participation of all students across the social and cultural backgrounds represented in the classroom” (NSW Department of Education & Training, 2003, p. 15). Such criteria, however, lack the sort of comprehensiveness required to be taken seriously as measures of inclusive education in any jurisdiction, and at best, form a basis for only one aspect of teacher evaluation with respect to inclusion.

Within Australia, including students with disability is now a component of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which requires teachers (including graduate teachers) to identify and use strategies which differentiate learning for students with disability (Standard 1.5), to understand the legislation in regards to students with disability (Standard 1.6), and to support the inclusive participation and engagement of students with disability (Standard 4.1) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School leadership, 2012).

Overview of the evidence-base on practices and policies

Inclusive education policy for students with disability: An international overview

Key points: International inclusive education policies

- Implementation of inclusive education varies enormously based on regional needs. Successful implementation of policy reform and effective practice in inclusive education requires major changes in educational provision for all students.
- Most countries view inclusion as a disability issue, this is, as a concept that applies particularly to students with disability, as opposed to other student cohorts.
- Most countries maintain separate forms of special education, such as special schools.
- Most governments are explicit in their support for inclusive education and acknowledge the need for interdisciplinary engagement and provision of additional resourcing to support the effective implementation of inclusive education policies.
- Policies must be localised and contextually appropriate while continuing to respond to a range of governmental, political and educational agendas that drive educational outcomes.
- Currently, many teachers are not adequately prepared for inclusive education.

As with conceptualisations of inclusive education, policy differs significantly between countries based on varying levels of commitment to and interpretations of international agreements such as the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and various UN conventions. In many instances, where inclusive policies exist, these have not been typically translated into classroom practice (Forlin, 2006; McConkey & Bradley, 2010; Sharma & Deppeler, 2005; Xu, 2012).

An overview of inclusive education policy in seven international regions is provided in order to highlight examples of similarities and differences between nations and educational regions (see Appendix B). In countries where no consistent national policy exists due to federated education systems, such as Australia and Canada, a region of that country has been selected (in this case Victoria, Australia and Alberta, Canada) where an examination of that region is instructive. Each region was chosen to illustrate a variety of practices of potential relevance to Australia.

1. Finland was selected because of its international reputation for education excellence, as evidenced by high PISA scores. *Note.* PISA is an international study that commenced in 1997 by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). It aims to evaluate education systems every three years by assessing 15-year-olds' competencies in three key subjects of reading, mathematics, and science, resulting in global country rankings. These are frequently used to evaluate and compare country achievements.
2. Italy was chosen because of its long-term policy of *integrazione scolastica* (inclusive education) and low national levels of segregated education.

3. Alberta, Canada is culturally similar to Australia with similar educational practices and structures.
4. The Cook Islands represents another country in the Pacific region; one that has been significantly influenced by Australia in the area of education.
5. Ukraine was selected as an example of a country in which inclusive education is a relatively new development.
6. Conversely, the United Kingdom provides evidence of policies of inclusion and exclusion that are well entrenched and which have been influential in Australia.
7. Victoria, Australia is selected as a sample state.

Key features of the international inclusive education policy examined across these regions include the tendency of most countries to view inclusive education as primarily a disability issue. While some of these regions' definitions of inclusion allude to the education of all students, such definitions are often quickly contradicted by the practices engaged in to bring about inclusion, such as the identification of individual students for support based on characteristics such as the presence of disability. Most countries maintain separated forms of special education, including Finland, despite that country's much lauded progressive education system (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011). A further common feature is the use of curriculum modification and IEPs as required.

All countries are explicit in their support for inclusive education, with even Ukraine, a relative newcomer, having developed legislation in an attempt to enable and support the practice. The different jurisdictions also recognise the value of inter-disciplinary support from various consultants and professionals, as required. While funding mechanisms vary slightly, it is clear that all these international regions recognise the need for additional resourcing to enable inclusion. Overall, it can be said that there are more similarities between the approaches of the various countries toward inclusive education than there are significant differences.

Having said this, it is clear inclusive policies need to address local contextual differences and respond to a range of political and educational agendas that drive educational outcomes within a specific region. Adopting models from other jurisdictions without due consideration to local requirements will not provide effective and sustainable practice. Similarly, to adopt the wording from international declarations into local policies, without considering the implications for implementation that will vary enormously based on regional needs, initiatives will not produce an effective inclusive approach to education. As an example, an explicit and detailed comparison of Finland and Australia will be made in the concluding Analysis and Comments section of this paper.

In reference to developing countries, a review of recent research from 13 Asia-Pacific regions identifies the issues, challenges, and proposals related to the implementation of inclusive education policy in these regions (Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Guang-xue, 2013). It concludes that a lack of well thought out policy, few resources, and limited understanding of inclusion seems widespread in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, special education and related service expertise and teacher education for inclusion is not in place to support teachers to work inclusively. According to Forlin (2012, p. 4), the lack

of emphasis on appropriate teacher education for inclusion is widespread where “...teacher education for inclusion in most regions has been tokenistic at best and non-existent at worst”.

Successful implementation of policy reform and effective practice in inclusive education requires significant changes in the way education is provided to all students, but most importantly, depends upon how adequately teachers and related professionals are prepared to implement the reform (Sharma et al., 2013). That is, “...successful inclusion requires much more than teachers having technical skills – teachers also need the right conditions to demonstrate their skills” (Shaddock, Giorcelli., & Smith, 2007, p. 2). When teachers are adequately trained, have access to appropriate resources and support and have a positive attitude towards including students with disability within their classrooms, there are many good practices which become evident (Boyle, et al., 2011; Foreman, 2011). Based on available data about principals’ satisfaction with the capabilities of graduates exiting general initial teacher education programs in Australia, it appears that new graduates are not ready for managing classroom activities, as only 30% of primary school principals and 27% of secondary school principals felt they were well prepared. In regards to understanding differences among students, only 26% of primary principals and 31% of secondary principals perceived they were adequately prepared (Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership, 2013).

International good practice in inclusive education

Key points: International good practice

- Good practice involves consideration of a wide range of aspects including:
 - clear policy and guidelines for implementation;
 - supportive and effective leadership;
 - positive teacher attitudes;
 - ownership, and acceptance;
 - trained teachers, education assistants ,and other personnel;
 - involvement of parents in decision making;
 - engagement of learners;
 - flexible curriculum responding to individual need;
 - a plan for ongoing teacher development; and
 - the nurturing of communities of lead practice.
- At a whole school level the cultures, policies, practices, and ethos of a school need to reflect an inclusive philosophy that seeks to identify and eliminate barriers to learning and to provide access for all students.

Given current definitions of inclusive education are both broad and contested, it is perhaps unsurprising good practice in inclusive education is not always easily defined

(Boyle, Scriven, Durning & Downes, 2011; Opertti & Brady, 2011). Contextual differences will often determine the success or otherwise of environmental, curricular, instructional, and social inclusion.

The idea that 'good practice' for inclusive education can exist in one measurable form is, thus, unfitting. Inclusion is highly context dependent and resists educational approaches that attempt to apply formulas or recipes to schools and classrooms and the activities that occur within them. There are, however, a number of practices that have been employed with some success across a variety of contexts and these can be viewed as providing the basis for a set of principles that can be used to guide educators and policy makers in their decisions with respect to inclusive education. Winter and O'Raw (2010), having reviewed the literature in this area, note that successful development of inclusive schools involves:

- understanding and acknowledging inclusion as a continuing and evolving process;
- creating learning environments that respond to the needs of all learners to achieve the greatest impact on their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development;
- undertaking a broad, relevant, appropriate and stimulating curriculum that can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners;
- strengthening and sustaining the participation of pupils, teachers, parents and community members in the work of the school;
- providing educational settings that focus on identifying and reducing barriers to learning and participation;
- restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools to respond to the diversity of pupils within the locality;
- identifying and providing the necessary support for teachers, other staff and pupils;
- engaging in appropriate training and professional development for all staff; and
- ensuring the availability of fully transparent and accessible information on inclusive policies and practices within the school for pupils, parents, support staff and other persons who are involved in the education of the pupil (Winter & O'Raw, 2010, p. 24).

Winter and O'Raw (2010) further propose some keys to success with respect to inclusive education. These include:

- *Leadership.* Research consistently demonstrates that without effective leadership for inclusive education, success will be difficult to achieve. Leaders must be knowledgeable supporters of inclusion who provide caring support for their staff (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Jones, Forlin, & Gillies, 2013).
- *Teachers.* Teachers must accept ownership of the process and a commitment to all children in a class. In addition, teachers must be highly skilled practitioners (Florian, 2012; Smith & Tyler, 2011).
- *Teacher beliefs and attitudes.* Positive attitudes must be evident if inclusive education is to be successful, and teachers must believe that all students are

capable of learning and contributing to the classroom community in positive ways (Jordan, Glenn & McGhie-Richmond, 2010; Sharma, 2012).

- *Teacher training.* A high degree of teacher efficacy for inclusive practice must be in evidence. In order to accomplish this, adequate teacher education must be provided, and teachers must take ownership over their own learning and seek out opportunities for professional growth (Pijl, 2010; Smith & Tyler, 2011).
- *Teachers' needs.* These can include planning time, training, personnel resources, material resources, class size, and consideration of the severity of the disability (Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011).
- *Teaching assistants.* Trained and knowledgeable teaching assistants are very helpful in facilitating inclusion, as they work under the direction of the classroom teacher (Symes & Humphrey, 2011).
- *Family involvement.* The involvement of the family is an important and essential element in the success of inclusive education. True home-school collaboration is necessary for success (Stivers, Francis-Cropper, & Straus, 2008).
- *The voice of the child.* The involvement and active engagement of the child is an essential part of the process. Education is no longer something done to children, but a process that children own and should actively participate in (Messiou, 2012).
- *Curriculum.* Flexible curriculum and the use of individualised instruction and plans are important elements of a successful inclusion program (Osberg & Biesta, 2010).

A set of guidelines has been developed by UNESCO to assist countries in strengthening inclusion in their strategies and plans (UNESCO, 2009). The guidelines suggest a series of 51 inclusive policy actions across 13 areas of policy concern (see Appendix C for a full list). In 2010, UNESCO and the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE, 2010) collaborated to produce the *Inclusive Education in Action* project that set out to identify how different regions were addressing these guidelines through good inclusive practice (EADSNE, 2010). The outcome was a website that highlights how different systems and schools are able to bridge the policy-to-practice gap by exemplifying a selection of the suggested policy actions (see Appendix C for the link). It also gives a clear indication of the enormous disparity in the way in which inclusion is being defined and practiced globally and the challenges regions face in identifying and measuring 'good practice'.

Current practice in inclusive education in Australia

Key points: Australian states' and territories' current practice in inclusive education

- All jurisdictions have well-developed policies that support inclusive practices.
- A range of placement options are available in each state and territory with highly structured approaches for identifying students with disability who require additional support.
- Complex and varied procedures are developed to support decision making for placements and level of support, with schooling in the regular classroom being considered the first and best option whenever possible.
- All jurisdictions provide special schooling options for students with disability, but students' ability to access these schools varies across and within states and territories.
- In-school support varies but is generally provided through additional staffing, multidisciplinary teams, and special programs.
- A comprehensive range of additional pathways are offered in secondary schools that are closely linked to transitions to post school options.

Inclusive policies and available support services for students with disability in Australian states and territories

In reference to the variety of settings for students with disability in Australia, which include primary, secondary, and senior secondary schools, mainstream schools, special schools, and specialist units in mainstream schools, there are broad similarities in the provision of support services for students with disability across states and territories. All jurisdictions must comply with the Disability Standards for Education, 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) that clarify to education providers their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). Each education system (that is, government, Catholic, and independent), though, has its own approach to providing services and different nomenclature used to describe these services (Dempsey, 2011a). As each state or territory government system have different descriptions of their support services, it is useful to separately examine these services, alongside regional policies about inclusive education, before drawing conclusions about generic current practice for students with disability in Australia.

Key policy and provision documents in relation to students with disability were selected from various government websites to provide a broad overview of placement provisions and in-school supports that are offered by individual jurisdictions (see Table 3). These documents were current as at July 2013.

While only the government sector is examined in depth in this report, it should be noted that the Catholic and Independent sectors also provide education for students with

disability. The policies and supports that are offered by these systems, though, vary enormously due to the greater autonomy they experience. In general, supports are similar to those offered in the government sector, although there are more differences at both inter and intra state levels (Cummings, 2012). Due to the diversity in the Catholic and Independent school systems, and the complexities involved in providing a valid overview of the non-government sector in general, this is seen as beyond the scope of this report. A separate review of the non-government sector is to be provided in late September 2013.

	Full Inclusion Primary	Full Inclusion Secondary	Full Inclusion Senior Secondary	Partial Inclusion/ Special Unit or class	Partial Inclusion/ Special Centre	Separate Special School
NSW	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Vic	✓	✓	✓			✓
ACT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qld	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
SA	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
NT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
WA	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Tas	✓	✓	✓			✓

Table 3 *Placement provision for each state and territory*

Table 3 Notes:

Full Inclusion indicates placement full-time in a mainstream classroom setting, with full participation in the curriculum and activities of that classroom (Underwood, 2012).

Partial Inclusion indicates the student has the option of placement in a special unit or class (or in some instances a number of classes – known as a special centre) that exists within the physical grounds of the mainstream school. The students may spend part of the school day in a mainstream classroom, or break times with the mainstream students (Cummings, 2012).

Separate Special School indicates the students are placed in a setting that is separate to, often physically as well as educationally, the student's local mainstream school. Special schools generally serve students who have moderate to severe disability and have specific criteria of entry.

Inclusive practice in the government school sector across all Australian states and territories

New South Wales

There has been a substantial increase in the number of students identified with one or more disability in both regular and in-support classes over the 2005-2011 period in NSW government schools (see Figure 2). This reflects the number of students identified with disability in both regular and support classes (Dempsey, 2011; Graham & Sweller, 2011). Although there has been an increase in the number of identified students with disability, there is no evidence of a substantial increase for the inclusion of these students in the mainstream classroom as the enrolment of students in special schools and support classes has not decreased. It is likely the increased awareness of disability (and diagnostic characteristics of students) and the boost in funding support have lead to an increase in students identified as requiring support. Students who have been recently identified have likely always been in mainstream settings (Dempsey, 2011).

School provision in NSW consists of access to special schools, classes within regular schools and funding to support students in regular classrooms (NSW Government, 2012). A recent report compiled by the NSW Legislative Council (2010) described supports to students with disability in mainstream schools as consisting of "...the school learning support team, the Learning Assistance Program, the Integration Funding Support Program, the School Learning Support Coordinator, and the proposed School Learning Support Program" (p. 17). The role of each of these supports is to assist the classroom teacher to adapt and modify curriculum and environments to ensure they can be accessed appropriately by students with disability.

Trends in educational placements for students with confirmed disability

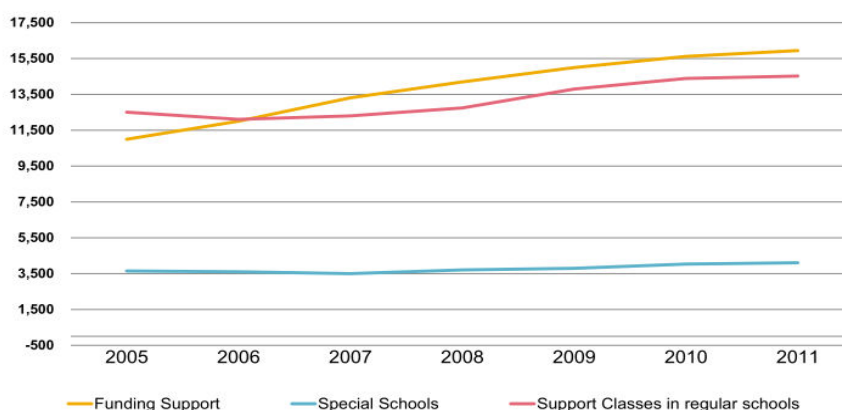


Figure 2 *Educational settings for students with confirmed disability in NSW government schools, 2005 – 2011 (Source: NSW Government, 2012, p. 5)*

In addition to these supports, schools have access to supplementary funding for students with disability in regular schools (NSW Department of Education and Training [DET], 2004). This additional funding is determined using a needs-based system which requires identification of level of need across a number of domains: curriculum, receptive language, expressive language, social competence, safety, hygiene, eating and dietary, health care procedures, mobility and positioning, and hand motor skills. Within each of these domains, there are descriptors of level of need ranging from low to extensive (NSW DET, 2004).

A range of support services such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy and counselling are also provided to students through both government and private providers. However, this is often on an ad hoc basis, and the provision of these services is inconsistent and scant in many regions (NSW Legislative Council, 2010). This provision of support services may change as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Disability Care Australia) is rolled out across Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

Transition planning for students with disability in NSW has been the focus of a recent Legislative Council Standing Committee (2012) report on transition support for students with disability. The Standing Committee found there were limited policies specifically relating to transition for students with disability, and these were mainly at the early or middle childhood stages. The NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC) employs Support Teachers Transition to assist students with disability and their families to develop a transition plan for post-school options and to connect them with services outside of the school, although some submissions to the Legislative Council indicated these services were scarce and difficult to access. Within schools, students with disability may be able to access VET training programs through partnerships with local TAFE institutions (NSW DEC, 2013). The NSW Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care (2013) coordinates a number of post-school option programs for young people with disability, including transition to work and community participation programs.

Victoria

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD, 2013a) in Victoria states that it "...is committed to delivering an inclusive education system that ensures all students have access to a quality education that meets their diverse needs" (p. 4). Students with disability are able to access a range of placement options including inclusion in regular classes, and special schools. There are more than 80 special schools in Victoria (Principals Association of Special Schools, Victoria, 2009), serving students with a variety of disability, including deafness, autism, intellectual disability, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The main support in Victoria is provided through the *Program for Students with Disabilities* (DEECD, 2013a), which is a supplementary funding program for schools, targeting students with moderate to severe disability. Assessment is an initial component of this program, and is provided through an external agency to determine eligibility for

extra support. A needs-based questionnaire is used to determine the level of educational support required (DEECD, 2013b).

As part of the *Program for Students with Disabilities*, a resource has been developed to support teachers in preparing appropriate programs. Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) provides teachers "... with access to assessment tools, individual reports, and guidance about teaching strategies and resources that will enable them to effectively plan and teach for the individual needs of students with disability and additional learning needs" (DEECD, 2011, p. 5). Other supports available in schools include psychologists, social workers, youth workers, speech pathologists, and visiting teachers. Specific early identification and intervention programs are provided to ensure students are able to access support as early as possible.

Students with disability at a senior secondary level can access a wide range of programs that prepare them for post-school experiences, including:

- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
- Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
- Special School Programs
- Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS)
- Pre-apprenticeship programs
- School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships
- Workplace learning.

Queensland

The Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET, 2012a) provides a range of school options including early childhood development programs, regular classrooms, special programs, and special schools. A policy of inclusion is promoted by the DET that indicates all teachers have a responsibility to "... embed the principle that inclusive education is part of all Education Queensland school practices, for all students all through their schooling" (DET, 2012b). Students with disability who are included in regular schools may be assisted through student support services which are allocated to schools or regions (DET, 2013). These may include a variety of supports such as guidance officers, specialist teachers, speech-language pathologists, behaviour support teachers, teacher aides, assistive technology, alternative format materials and special provisions for assessments.

The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) provides additional funding support in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment, speech-language impairment and vision impairment. The EAP process utilises a profile of student needs to determine the extent of additional supports required for curriculum, communication, social participation and emotional wellbeing, health and personal care, and safety and learning environment/access. This profile is similar to the needs-based analyses conducted by other departments of education in other states.

In senior schools, students with disability have options to participate in a variety of pathways: "As part of planning for the transition to post-school options, Queensland students in Year 10 complete a Senior Education and Training (SET) plan. Essentially, the SET plan includes what the student's goals are and what pathways they take to reach those goals" (DET, 2012a, p. 36). Pathways may consist of regular schooling options with support, VET pathways, or individual learning options.

Australian Capital Territory

According to the *Students With a Disability: Meeting Their Educational Needs* policy (ACT Education & Training, 2008), ACT schools are "... required to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability at the time of enrolment and during the course of their education, ensuring they have the support they need to successfully access and participate in the school curriculum, programs and activities in the company of their same-age peers" (p. 1). Students are provided for in a variety of settings, including regular classrooms, early intervention centres, learning support units, and specialist schools. All students are eligible to access their local school (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2013).

In order to access services outside of the support received in the regular classroom, students with disability must meet certain criteria, which includes an appraisal of need in the areas of access (communication, mobility, health and wellbeing, dietary and medical conditions, safety) and participation (social development, curriculum participation, communication, behaviours, literacy and numeracy) in the classroom (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2010a). The appraisal process is undertaken with the principal, classroom teacher, parents, and a trained departmental moderator. The moderator "... ensures the process is followed equitably and that the descriptors are applied consistently for all students in ACT schools" (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2010a, p. 2).

Although difficult to locate specific information on students with disability in the senior secondary area, general information indicates there are opportunities for students to access a range of pathways including further education opportunities and vocational educational training (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2010b).

South Australia

The South Australian Department of Education and Child Development (DECD, 2006) states that the *Students with Disability Policy* "... provides a framework for the delivery of teaching and learning practices, and the provision of services and support, to ensure that all students with disability can enjoy the benefits of education in a supportive environment that values diversity, inclusion, and participation" (p. 1). In addition to the regular classroom, where the majority of students are included, there are a range of alternative placement options. There are currently 15 special schools, 35 special units, and 85 schools with special classes in South Australia (DECD, 2013a).

The state-wide Verification and Professional Support Team is responsible for verifying eligibility for support services and the levels of support required (DECD, 2012). In order to meet the eligibility criteria to access special programs, students must meet the criteria for disability in the areas of autistic spectrum disorder, global developmental delay, intellectual disability, physical disability, sensory disability (hearing and vision), or speech and / or language disability. Evidence must be provided in regard to how the disability impacts on the student's progress and participation in the curriculum and their participation in the school community (DECD, 2007). A range of assessments are used to determine the level of student need and information is gathered from a variety of sources, such as from psychologists.

The DECD (2013b) has well-defined processes in place for senior secondary students to access transition programs and services. The programs "... focus on employment training and the development of social skills, community living, independent living, and personal living skills" (Para. 2). The programs are delivered through two dedicated state-wide transition centres. Links are also provided to further information on referral information for the transition centres and post-school options for students with disability.

Western Australia

The Department of Education (DoE) in Western Australia (WA) provides a range of placement options, based on educational need and eligibility (DoE, 2013a). These include regular school settings (with visiting teacher support, if necessary), special classes, special centres and special schools. To access special schools and centres, students must meet the eligibility criteria described in the *Framework for Eligibility Criteria and Enrolment Processes in Education Support Schools and Centres* (DoE, 2008). SchoolsPlus (DoE, 2013b) is a framework for analysing student need in the areas of curriculum differentiation, assessment and reporting, collaborative planning, communication, social competence, health care, mobility and positioning, toileting hygiene, meal management, self-regulation and resilience, and mental health. There are six levels of need within each of these 11 dimensions. The Manager Student Services, in consultation with the principal and any other relevant parties, verifies the eligibility of students to access special schools or centres (DoE, 2008).

DoE in WA has recently introduced The School of Special Educational Needs: Disability (SSEND) which is "...committed to building the capacity of teachers and school-based staff to deliver effective classroom programs that value the diversity of students in inclusive learning environments" (DoE, 2013c, para. 1). SSEND support schools provide appropriate assistance through professional learning opportunities and direct contact with schools. SSEND also provides a range of resources, including assistive technology.

In addition to the pathways available through regular senior secondary schooling, a range of other supports are offered. Transition planning for students with disability includes reference to "...compulsory education through to independent adulthood. Pathways can include senior secondary education, vocational education and training, an apprenticeship or traineeship, higher education, community education, informal learning, volunteering,

leisure and recreation, workplace experience, casual, part-time or full-time employment, and various combinations of the above" (DoE, 2012, Para. 1). A team approach is used to ensure appropriate pathways are available to all students.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education and Training (DET) *Philosophy of Inclusion for Students with a Disability* states that "...inclusivity embraces the idea that everyone is an individual and their diversity is respected. Inclusion starts from recognition of the differences between students and builds on such differences to minimise barriers in education for all students" (DET, n.d., p. 1). This philosophy translates into the option for parents to choose the educational setting that they feel will best meet the needs of their child. Settings available include the regular classroom with support (consultant or withdrawal) and special educational facilities. There are currently four special schools, 10 special centres and six special units (including two for students who are gifted) approved by the NT DET (2012a).

To enrol in a special school or special centre, a student must have below average intellectual functioning, deficits in adaptive behavior, and require intensive assistance to access the curriculum (DET, 2011). Evidence must be provided to support the eligibility of the student for enrolment. This may consist of reports from psychologists or diagnostic testing undertaken by the school. The manager of Mental Health and Child Protection and the principal work together to determine if the information presented allows the child to meet the criteria for enrolment.

A comprehensive range of options exist for students in the NT in regards to transition from middle to senior school, and senior school to workplace or community. A transition from school program "...assists the transition of students with disability from mainstream and special education settings into further education, employment and adult life" (DET, 2012b, para. 1). A transition flowchart describes the process involved in accessing supports and information and transition support groups are available throughout the Territory.

Tasmania

Provision for students with disability in Tasmania consists of enrolling a student with disability at his or her local school (preferred) or special school (Department of Education [DoE], 2013): "Enrolment at a special school will be considered when it is requested by a parent and when the child has a significant, identifiable disability which includes a moderate to profound intellectual disability; and when the child is eligible for placement on the Register for Students with Severe Disability" (DoE, 2012, p. 10).

The Register for Students with Severe Disability (DoE, 2013b) describes in depth the eligibility of students, in particular, students with diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, physical disability or health impairment, multiple disability, psychiatric disability, vision impairment, or deaf or hearing impaired. Assessments

gathered to support the student's eligibility for funding and services takes into account the functioning of the student in a variety of environments. A placement committee makes the final determination on school placement, including enrolment at one of the eight special schools.

Pathways for students with disability in secondary settings follow a similar process as that for all students. The *Pathway Plan* (DoE, 2013c) details the route the student will follow to achieve their goals. Some of these pathways include transition support, school-based apprenticeships, VET in schools, and trade training centres. Individual planning allows for students' individual needs to be taken into account and supports the progression of students from school settings to post school options (Disability & Community Services, 2011).

Educational outcomes currently being achieved by students with disability in Australia

Key points: Educational outcomes achieved by students with disability in Australia

- Each state and territory has different approaches to assessment and reporting for students with disability. This lack of consistency means it is difficult to determine whether appropriate progress is being made by students with varying levels of disability, what outcomes are being achieved, and the levels at which outcomes are attained.
- Students with disability are currently under-represented in national and state testing and accountability measures.
- In most jurisdictions, students with significant disability have access to alternative or adapted curriculum. The reporting of outcomes from such alternative curricula, however, is inconsistent and does not necessarily reflect the 'value' that students may have gained from their schooling.
- The inconsistent assessment of students with disability means the outcomes for these students are unknown and are not included in the decision making regarding national and state testing and subsequent planning that takes place around this testing.

According to Mitchell (2010), "How to measure the educational performance of students with special educational needs with validity and reliability is one of the major contemporary challenges facing educators around the world" (p. 71). In regards to assessing outcomes on students' progress through the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2013) suggests teachers should assess students against achievement standards or against individual goals. It is also stated that each state and territory may have differing approaches to assessment and reporting. This lack of consistency across states and territories, nevertheless, can cause difficulty in determining whether appropriate progress is being

made by students with varying levels of disability (Cumming & Dickson, 2013). Alternative forms of assessment for students with disability include functional assessment (Eagar, Green, Gordon, Owen, Masso & Williams, 2006), portfolio assessment (Department of Education WA, 2013), modified assessment (Davies, 2012), and testing accommodations and modifications (Davies & Elliott, 2012). With such diversity in measuring outcomes, it is extremely difficult to ascertain with any consistency the outcomes being achieved by students with disability in Australia.

This difficulty is also impacted by differences among states and territories in regard to the definition of disability (Australian Government, 2011). A consequence of the lack of a consistent definition of disability is that the reported prevalence of disability in the school-aged population ranges from 3 to 8% (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2011). The Australian Government is currently working to address the issue of definition by implementing a nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability, detailing four levels of adjustment (no adjustment, supplementary, substantial and extensive), and four disability categories (physical, cognitive, sensory and social/emotional) (DEEWR, 2013). Students who fall within these defined categories, nonetheless, still have a wide variety of characteristics, and require varying levels of adjustment, which also greatly impacts upon what constitutes an appropriate way to measure their learning outcomes.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA], 2008) states that students should have access to “world-class curriculum and assessment” (p. 10). Cumming and Dickson (2013) suggest that tests such as NAPLAN have underlying premises of objectivity and fairness, where student achievement is completed as a standardised process and all students should complete such assessments under the same conditions. There are, however, indications that students with disability are not participating in national assessments in Australia and that their educational outcomes are, therefore, unknown (Davies, 2012; Dempsey & Davies, 2013; Elliott, Davies & Kettler, 2012). As outlined in the National Protocols for Test Administration, which provide the framework for student participation in NAPLAN, “... students with significant intellectual disability may be exempted from testing. Exempt students are not assessed and are deemed not to have met the national minimum standard” (NAPLAN, 2012, p. vi). Data are provided on the achievement of some student groups (that is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students who have English as a second language), but no data are reported for students with disability (Dempsey & Davies, 2013).

The standard of educational accountability for students with disability appears substantially less than for the regular student body, as many students do not seem to participate in national testing. There is also currently no legal requirement for schools to use alternative assessments such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disability (although the recent Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 [DEEWR, 2013a] suggested that this may become a focus in future). It has, therefore,

been suggested that “...equitable inclusion of students with disability in current Australian educational accountability testing is not occurring from a social perspective and is not in principle compliant with law” (Cumming & Dickson, 2013, p. 221).

Current accountability practices for students with disability appear to undermine the significant outcomes potentially achieved during inclusive education. In particular, to determine the outcomes for students with significant disability an alternative assessment may be required. If national accountability testing (for example, NAPLAN) is to remain a part of the educational landscape, then subsequent measures that allow students with disability to demonstrate they have gained value as a result of their educational journey should be implemented. The allocation of country-wide standardised A-E grading systems (WA School Curriculum & Standards Authority, SCSA, 2013) is inappropriate for some groups of students who may never achieve at this level, or those who are working on individual plans, or ‘non-academic’ goals.

Students with significant disability in the senior school may, similarly, not be eligible for the secondary certificate that most jurisdictions provide, as they often do not meet the criteria required (for example, DECD, 2013b; DET QLD, 2012a; NT DET, 2012b). On some occasions, students may continue to accrue points towards the certificate, or they may be eligible for alternative certification, particularly if they are on individualised programs.

Good practice in inclusive education in Australia

Key points: Australian good practice

- Based on the identified international literature on good inclusive practices discussed earlier in this report, it would seem that a range of these approaches are being recommended by all Australian education systems.
- The key approaches in Australia focus on two levels of whole-school practice and in-class support.
- At a whole-school level, good practices include adjustments to cultures, policies, and practices, development of support structures, regimes of funding support, and the provision of and access to equitable learning opportunities.
- At an in-class level, good practices include differentiating or introducing alternative curricula, the application of universal design, use of technologies, individual planning through the IEP, and a focus on quality teaching for all students.
- Nonetheless, there is a lack of evidence-based data on the impact of these practices on changes in learning outcomes for students with disability.

While there is a body of literature that aims to identify good inclusive practice, there is much less literature that reviews actual practices that meet these criteria. In particular, there is a dearth of data on good inclusive practice in most jurisdictions in Australia.

Given this paucity of research, this section draws more heavily on what is promoted in the literature as good practice for Australian schools and this is supported, wherever possible, with research data. Two perspectives are reviewed: good practices (1) at the school and (2) at the classroom level.

Whole-school practice

Researchers have shown how a wide range of adjustments to school cultures, organisational practices and teacher behaviour expedites inclusive practice (Shaddock, 2006; Shaddock, Neill, van Limbeek & Hoffman-Rapp, 2007). Schools need to provide appropriate support, collaboration, planning and feedback to teachers to ensure they are able to use good practice in relation to inclusive education. This is clearly articulated in Australian legislation (for example the Disability Standards for Education, 2005), supporting the inclusion of students with disability as it points to the need for collaboration, participation, curriculum support, and student wellbeing as areas in which staff are required to consider the needs of individual students (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). In relation to curriculum, for example, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006) state clearly that "...education provider[s] must take reasonable steps to ensure the course or program is designed in such a way that the student is, or any student with disability is, able to participate in the learning experiences (including the assessment and certification requirements) of the course or program, and any relevant supplementary course or program, on the same basis as a student without disability, and without experiencing discrimination" (p. 23).

Evidence of good practice in relation to assisting teachers also consists of appropriate provision of services to support the inclusion of students with disability (Boyle, et al., 2011). Quality teaching practices in the classroom require support and school-wide collaboration and school leaders, in particular, have an important role to play in supporting and nurturing quality teaching in school staff (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005). Central to the services provided, though, are the policies which underpin them. The Queensland DETE (2012b), for example, has implemented a policy on inclusive education that states the responsibilities and procedures that should be followed by all educational staff including regional directors, assistant regional directors, principals and teachers. The supports offered to each staff member are clearly disseminated. As a component of the support available to staff and students, the Statewide Student Services (DETE, 2013) team offers a range of assistance in the areas of assistive technology, nursing services, hearing impairment, occupational therapy, physical impairment, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, and vision impairment. All states and territories have similar support services available, but it is difficult to determine the efficacy or reliability of such supports due to the lack of published data and, therefore, the impact of these on practice.

Good in-class practice

A number of different approaches have been adopted that have been identified in the literature as good in-class practice.

1. Quality teaching

Quality teaching has been identified as a key component of positive outcomes for diverse students (Alton-Lee, 2003), specifically for those with disability. There are a number of characteristics of quality teaching for students with diverse abilities including a focus on student achievement, inclusive and cohesive learning communities, clear links between school and the student's culture, responsiveness to learning processes, availability of opportunity to learn, goals and resources (including ICT) are aligned, scaffolding and feedback are provided, self-regulation and meta-cognitive strategies are promoted, and teachers and students jointly engage in setting and assessing goals (Alton-Lee, 2003).

2. Inclusive pedagogy

Quality inclusive pedagogy relates to teachers' craft knowledge: what, why and how they do what they do (Florian, 2012). Teachers should be supported by their schools / systems to have the opportunity to enhance their own skills in reflection, instruction, management, and strategies for learning (Boyle, et al., 2011). By providing explicit or multi-faceted instruction (aimed at ensuring students with disability are able to access the curriculum), there is often an unintended positive effect on academic attainment by other students in the classroom. Boyle, et al. (2011) describes this as a "professional positive" (p. 73) of inclusive practice.

3. Adaptive curricula

One aspect of good practice is to use adapted curricula to support student diversity (Salend, 2011). Differentiating the curriculum to cater for the individual needs and differing behaviours of children has become a key aspect of inclusive education, yet this requires considerable teacher expertise, planning, and preparation (Shaddock, 2009). ACARA (2013) has recognised the need to use differentiated curriculum for some students with disability and has provided guidance to schools and teachers Australia-wide when using the Australian Curriculum. This direction includes advice on how to determine a starting point for students with disability and how to use the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum (curriculum, general capabilities, and cross-curriculum priorities) to address the needs of all students in the classroom (ACARA, 2013). Examples of adjustments that may be made are provided to illustrate how students are able to participate in the curriculum. Students' changing needs must also be taken into account to ensure teachers are consistently meeting the requirements of students with disability to achieve appropriate outcomes (Boyle et al., 2011).

4. Alternative curricula

In some instances, education departments in various Australian regions have introduced alternative curricula or resources to assist students with significant disability to achieve outcomes appropriate to their future environments. For example:

- The Victorian DEECD (2013) uses ABLES (Abilities Based Learning and Education Support) resources to support students with disability and to assist in the development of an individual learning plan for the student. These resources consist of an assessment tool, directions on setting individual learning goals (keeping in mind the Victorian Essential Learning Standards [VELS]), and research-based strategies to support students' learning.
- The DET (2013) in WA has recently piloted a program known as ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) which aims to offer a range of programs for students aged 11-25 years, at all ability levels, specifically targeting students with significant disability at the senior secondary level. DET posits that "ASDAN is a curriculum development organisation and an internationally recognised awarding body, which grew out of research work at the University of the West of England in the 1980s. ASDAN programs and qualifications blend activity-based curriculum enrichment with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of key skills and other personal and social skills, with emphasis on negotiation, co-operation and rewarding achievement" (DET, WA, 2013, Para. 3).
- A further example of alternative curriculum includes life-skills curricula developed by the NSW Board of Studies (2007) which is designed to be embedded in regular settings (Years 7-10) or completely replace the existing curricula (Years 11&12).

5. Assistive and adaptive technologies

The rapid increase in available technologies (both assistive and instructive) has provided teachers with an ever-increasing range of tools to support students with disability in the mainstream classroom (Bryant, Bryant, Shih & Seok, 2010; Dalton & Roush, 2010). Assistive technology allows students with disability to access physical environments, be mobile, communicate effectively, access computers, and enhance functional skills that may be difficult without the technology. Article 9 [Accessibility] of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability* (United Nations, 2006) discusses the right of individuals with disability to access to information and communication technologies and systems on an equal basis with others. Assistive technology comes in low, medium, and high-tech forms and has been found to assist with academic success when selected to match the individual needs of the student (Simpson, McBride, Lowdermilk & Lynch, 2009). In particular, the increase in iPads® and other mobile learning technologies in classrooms has been cited as improving student productivity, creativity and engagement while allowing for differentiated, explicit and individualised instruction (Mulholland, 2011). Many schools throughout Australia are increasingly adopting these forms of technologies (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Vic, n.d.).

6. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In 2007, van Kraayenoord described good inclusive pedagogical practices which have been undertaken in classrooms in Australia. Examples of these practices are concepts of differentiation and UDL. Types of differentiation undertaken include "...allowing extra time, expecting less work, using different outcomes, and providing help with writing" (p. 392). It was noted, though, that there was inconsistency among settings in which these strategies were used, even though the same students were accessing both regular and special education settings. Universal Design, in contrast to differentiation, is concerned with "...the conscious and deliberate creation of lessons and outcomes that allow all students access to and participation in the same curricula" (p. 392). Van Kraayenoord (2007) describes Universal Design for Learning as being able to provide "accessible, flexible, usable and customisable curriculum for all students", which can be used in combination with instructional differentiation.

7. Individual planning

Individual planning for students with disability is considered in Australia to be the cornerstone of good practice in catering for the needs of students (Dempsey, 2012). Individual planning provides for the inclusion of key stakeholders in the process (DETE, Qld, 2012). The engagement of the parents and the student themselves is seen, though, as critical to development of effective IEPs and is highlighted by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (2013) in WA which notes that "If there is a legitimate reason for a student to be following a modified curriculum (for example, an individual education plan, documented learning plan or differentiated learning plan), schools should negotiate and document any variation to the reporting of the student's achievement with the student and her/his parents or carers" (p. 3).

All jurisdictions in Australia use some form of individual planning, under different titles. For example, IEP (Individual Education Plan or Program), EAP (Education Adjustment Plan), NEP (Negotiated Education Plan) or ILP (Individual Learning Plan), to document the individual requirements and outcomes for students. Although all states and territories provide individualised planning for students, Dempsey (2012) states that there is a great deal of inconsistency in the way these are being used and in the number of students with disability with these plans. He goes further to suggest that "...being provided with an IEP is heavily influenced by the serendipity of the state you reside in and the type of school system in which you are enrolled" (p. 29). Dempsey highlights the need for a more consistent use of IEPs with students with disability in Australia. Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorcelli and Arthur-Kelly (2009) similarly emphasise that "... individual plans can be valuable – but they first must be seen as a process that actually helps" (p. 69), rather than just as an administrative requirement or to keep stakeholders happy. Indeed, this aspect was noted in the Review of the Disability Standards for Education, and the Australian Government have committed to investigate the *effective* use of IEPs across states and territories (DEEWR, 2013), including formats and application.

Individual planning, in the form of IEPs, can be used within a personalised learning environment, which is becoming an increasingly popular model in some Australian jurisdictions (DEECD, Vic, 2007). Personalised learning refers to all students in the classroom being central to the learning and is a different model to that of individualised instruction. ICT is a key component of personalised learning, along with concepts of life-long learning and communities of collaboration (DEECD, 2007). While personalised learning does not target any particular group of students, it may allow for a range of diverse students to experience greater success in learning outcomes, due to stronger student engagement in the learning. For some students with significant difficulties, however, specific planning may still be required.

In relation to in-class practice, it should be noted that while there seems to be a relatively large international research knowledge base in regards to best practice in catering for students with disability in regular classroom settings, there may be a disconnect between the research and the reality in the classroom (Grima-Farrell, Bain & McDonagh, 2011). This disconnect may have adverse effects on the implementation of inclusive practices in Australian schools. A number of impediments to good inclusive practice have been recognised including:

- poorly communicated rationale;
- overly ambitious or limited scope of change;
- the pace of change being too swift or slow;
- inadequate resourcing;
- lack of long-term commitment;
- lack of key staff championing inclusion;
- parents not included as collaborators;
- ineffectual leadership, and
- a lack of relationship to other initiatives (Hargreaves, 1997).

Likewise, there are a lack of data in Australia to determine local impediments. Similarly, a lack of responsiveness to student needs, heightened by a lack of effective professional development in best practices identified by research, evaluation, and design of programs, all contribute to a lack of good practice (Grima-Farrell, et al., 2011).

4. Analysis and conclusions

Key points: Analysis and conclusion

- Australia should exercise caution in the wholesale adoption of any policies or practices from elsewhere without due consideration of context and the complexity of the jurisdictional educational systems that exist within its states and territories.
- While the Finnish education system, for example, is renowned for its progressive and highly ranked outcomes, there is no evidence to link this positively to their model of inclusive education. Recent changes in support funding in Finland have not yet been evaluated, therefore, decisions based on the Finnish system should be heedful.
- The inclusion of students with disability is emphasised through regional and national policies in Australia. Despite the rhetoric supporting inclusion, however, as a concept and in practice, it is recognised there are challenges in the enactment of inclusive education in Australia.
- One of the major challenges is the lack of consistent data across all jurisdictions on students with disability. This has already been flagged by the SCSEEC and it is timely that full endorsement has been made for the collection of nationally consistent data to be implemented in a phased approach from 2013 to 2015 (SCSEEC, 10 May, 2013). These data will identify "...how many students with a disability study in Australian schools, where they are located, and the level of adjustments provided for them to participate in schooling on the same basis as other students" (DEEWR, 2013, Para. 2).
- To ensure that inclusive education policies address the needs of learners and that implementation ideas through policy development are manageable and practicable, a proactive systemic approach is needed that is supplemented by local input and involvement.
- Inclusion policy needs to be firmly embedded and informed by local research that addresses the specific needs of a region by considering urban and rural situations, fiscal constraints, support structures, and the capabilities of those who are to implement it.
- To enact an inclusive approach requires appropriate preparation of all stakeholders. This particularly applies to the training of staff at all levels from the system to the classroom. Systems that perform well in international benchmarks, such as Finland, boast highly qualified teaching staff that are given latitude to make professional decisions. Policies also need to respond to social inclusion issues. Issues surrounding choice and equity; increased pressure to demonstrate improvement in academic outcomes; acceptance of social and political changes in the school community; aligning teacher education programs with inclusive education policy; initial teacher education and teacher education as professional learning, all need further review and clarification.

Numerous points are proposed to ensure ongoing support for inclusive education by providing equitable opportunities for all learners within Australia regardless of disability, diversity, or distance. While the focus in this report has been on students with disability, the following suggestions should be considered in light of opportunities to look beyond disability to catering for diversity in general. In order to move forward with inclusion these ideas would involve effective partnerships between schools, Government and non-government service providers, as a collaborative effort at all levels is most likely to produce the best outcomes.

In the field of education, Finland is often upheld internationally as a model of progressive and high-quality schooling. Finland has a reputation for education excellence, having rated highly on the PISA tests and outranked Australia on global measures of educational outcomes. Education reform in Finland has involved an alternative model of inclusive education policy and practice.

This section commences with a comparative review of the Finnish education system as a potential model for Australia. The provision of a service for students with disability that is grounded in equality and equity in Finland is compared to the disability and categorical model that currently dominates in Australia. Challenges and cautions to implementing such a model in the Australian context are discussed.

[The Finnish education system and its policy relevance to Australia](#)

While full inclusion promotes the regular classroom as the only option, many regions adopt a more liberal approach offering a range of schooling options. This approach is the one that is seen throughout all jurisdictions in Australia and in Finland. Instead of creating inclusive education for students with disability as has been the focus in Australia, though, the Finnish strategy has been based on the ideas of equality and equity and building “education for all” in its truest sense (Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Unlike the Australian education system which is state-based, the Finnish system is relatively homogenous with much greater autonomy by teachers and very little accountability through external assessment. Finland has been reluctant to adopt any large-scale accountability approaches or high-stakes testing (Sahlberg, 2007) and there is little discussion about accountability or evidence-based practice in Finland (Hopmann (2008). Instead, there is high value placed on teachers’ professionalism and considerable trust placed in local schools which “are seen as places run by highly educated and esteemed teachers who know best how to do their job” (Hopmann, 2008, p. 432). Teaching in Finland is considered a high status career choice. It is very competitive to obtain a training place resulting in highly qualified teachers.

The progress of the inclusion of students with disability in regular schools has been gradual in Finland, with the emphasis being on preventive actions for students with mild problems. According to Jahnukainen (2011, p. 497), “...the Finnish system seems to be more flexible, addressing the needs of students with mild or temporary special support needs with relatively low costs in the regular school context”. In the Finnish education system, special education services are provided within regular schools without the need

for a diagnosis. Support is based on the observed needs of the student, and hence formal assessment is not such a crucial part of organising special education services. The Finnish definition of eligibility for special education is grounded on observed needs (a “difficulty model”), rather than diagnosed disability (a “disability” model) (Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Although there are alternative separate special schools for students with high-support needs in Finland, as there are in Australia, this informal approach to special education is the most distinctive feature of their special education system and is the main service delivery model (Jahnukainen, 2011). It began as a resource-room pull-out model, but currently has many variations including collaborative and consultative teaching. The function of this model is preventive, providing targeted intervention for at-risk students, similar to the US response-to-intervention (RtI) model (for example, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008). Students receiving this level of support do not require a formal diagnosis of disability as this is not considered to be special education and they can access support without a need for official assessment or referrals.

Finland’s strong performance on PISA has stimulated heightened interest currently in this Finnish model for application in Australia. It is difficult, though, to ascertain the potential success of implementation of this model for Australia due to the diversity in approaches employed and differing local needs experienced throughout the jurisdictions. While states and territories in Australia employ a needs-based approach to identify students requiring supplementary support to some extent, access to additional support is usually competitive and associated with identifying categories of need or disability and specifying levels of support required.

Providing support through a model such as the Finnish one that emphasises early intervention based on observed need, as opposed to one that currently exists in Australia focusing on identification and classification, may take insufficient account of the multiplicity of classroom needs found in the many rural and remote community schools. If Australia were to adopt this model, then an alternative means of identifying which schools required additional funding due to local challenges would need to be established. Any such approach would have to ensure equitable and fair distribution of limited funds. This would, by necessity, require some means of determining how the support was to be shared, if it was not to be allocated by level of disability or need.

Prior to 2010 in Finland, support funding was allocated to individual children and followed the child in what was termed “bounty” funding (Jahnukainen, 2011). Allocation was determined based on an additional pro rata amount. This is a similar model to that currently employed in most education systems in Australia. Recently, though, there has been no extra funding for any students with special educational needs in Finland; although students with severe disability do receive individually defined extra funding from other than normal education base funding resources (Kirjavainen, 2010). This change from combined base and bounty funding to the base funding only model has meant that schools and municipalities no longer receive any extra funding by defining some students as having special educational needs. The model described here is in contrast to that proposed by the recent *Review of Funding for Schooling* in Australia (DEEWR, 2011),

which suggested that a model of base funding for students, with a loading according to student need, would be the preferred method of funding schools. The proposed Australian funding model was to ensure that all students with disability and other educational need will have funding as required, regardless of the educational sector or region in which they reside.

In a recent paper, Kenway (2013) critically examined the policy attempt in Australia to address inequality in schools through the *Review of Funding for Schooling Final Report* (2011), known as the 'Gonski' Report (Gonski, Boston, Greiner, Lawrence, Scales, & Tannock, 2011). Compared with other OECD countries such as Finland, Kenway confirmed that Australia has some way to go in providing high-quality and equitable education and highlighted that "...social advantage and disadvantage and educational success and failure are linked in Australia's school system" (p. 21). Further, strong evidence was provided in the Gonski Report to show that socially disadvantaged students, those with disability, and Indigenous students are disproportionately concentrated in government schools and must, therefore, be properly funded. Kenway (2013) argued that a weakness in the Gonski Report was the focus on "...disadvantaged schools rather than on the systemic relationships that also contribute to disadvantage" (p. 1). This was echoed by Yates (2013) noting that better funding of disadvantaged students also builds "... a climate of competitive anxiety that embeds parental concerns about maintaining differential advantage" (p. 39).

While the model applied in Finland has seen the recent reduction in funding for students with disability to base funding only, there is as yet no data on the success of this approach. There is also no evidence to link their model of inclusion to the success they have achieved internationally in comparative assessments such as PISA. Currently, there seems little support for the reduction of directed funding for students with disability in Australia. Due to the existing disparities already noted (Gonski, 2011) a bounty approach type model would seem pertinent in order to ensure equitable access to education for disadvantaged groups. Australia should, therefore, exercise caution in the indiscriminate embracing of any inclusion policies or practices from other countries without due consideration of the application of these to the context of the diverse existing educational systems.

Suggestions for areas of further consideration to assist future policy development on good practice in inclusive education

Key points: Suggestions for moving forward

- Collaboration across government departments, schools, family, para-professionals, education systems, and community is essential to advocate for inclusive education and to build the infrastructure necessary to support it.
- Close liaison across all jurisdictions is needed to ensure federal support via Commonwealth funding for inclusion considers the diversity of need both inter and intra state to enable equitable allocation of funding and resources to support students with disability.
- School systems would benefit from increasing the skills of teachers and principals / leaders through consistent and effective training in inclusive education supported by appropriate policies.
- School systems would benefit from nurturing and developing teachers through specific mentoring programs designed to share the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality educational access for all students.
- High-quality initial pre-service training for teachers with practical, context-relevant input, and opportunities for extensive collaboration with highly effective practitioners is critical. Ongoing review and monitoring of this is important.
- A process for the monitoring of the implementation of the Disability Standards for Education (2005) in regards to students with disability at all levels (state, system, school, class) would ensure greater accountability.
- A shared approach across all service providers is important to proactively establish procedures for reducing the gap between high and low performing students and those who are marginalised due to disability.
- A process for consistently measuring and reporting student outcomes across jurisdictions and systems would ensure that data are available to record progress in academic and social domains.
- The wider role of special schools in supporting inclusive whole school practices could be reevaluated as more work is needed to ensure the best use of this invaluable resource.
- Care should be taken when implementing inclusion policies or practices from other countries with due consideration to Australia's diverse existing educational systems.

For Australia to make continued progress towards achieving inclusive education and be accountable for the outcomes of this, there are a number of on-going issues that will need to be considered. The following suggestions are posited to assist future policy development on good practice in inclusive education.

Tension arising from the choice and equity debates

Many of the political and ideological debates regarding inclusion continue to be centered on choice and equity. Funding linked to categories of disability determines much of the support for students with disability in schools. Although exact figures are not available on what percentage of funds is spent in determining eligibility for special services, evidence from other countries suggests it can range from 20-40% of the total special education budget. Further, a large majority of students who have genuine learning needs do not get funded (for example, students classified as having borderline intellectual disability or a student with learning difficulty). In a similar vein, special schools are a choice for families in Australia, yet there has been ongoing debate about whether separate special schools are appropriate options for educating students with disability (Ashman & Elkins (2012).

Increased pressure to demonstrate improvement in academic outcomes

In Australia, like many other international contexts, there is increased pressure to demonstrate improvement in academic outcomes. Schools are, therefore, expected to address non-academic barriers to student success that may arise from social and other disadvantage. High-stakes assessment and accountability regimes continue despite strong evidence to show they have no effect on student achievement (National Research Council, 2011). Yates (2013) argues that "...neither testing nor lack of testing will solve the issue of schooling and difference and social inequalities (p. 39). Beyond this debate, there are strong efforts to reshape curriculum in ways that are important to addressing issues of difference and social equity (Yates, 2013). According to Foreman and Arthur-Kelly (2008) "... there is a need for a sharpened focus on the question of how to translate what is known about the key elements of inclusive and differentiated practice into reality in classrooms around the Australasian region (p. 121). They propose, nevertheless, that charting student outcomes and identifying teacher needs is challenging in what they term the "milieu" of the inclusive classroom. Laisch (2013) argues that while improving educational outcomes may realise some improvement in individual economic circumstances to overcome social inequality, it will not address the social indicators of inequality or the economic causes of such inequity" (p. 22).

Issues of social inequities and schooling are often complex and require more resources than a single school can provide to address them. There is increasing interest in developing collaborative approaches to respond to these barriers that cross school, health, social, family, and community systems. There is also a move in many systems to establish greater links and collaboration between special schools and regular schools to provide support for a more inclusive educational system. Arrangements such as school networking (Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010; West, 2010), university-school partnerships (Deppeler, 2012), and collaboration across systems and professionals (Edwards, Daniels, Gallagher, Leadbetter, & Warmington, (2009), are increasingly suggested as productive ways to build capacity and to avoid "... the fragmentation and duplication created by 'single input services based on categorical funding' when trying to serve individuals and families with multiple and complex needs" (Scott, 2010, p. 72).

Acceptance of social and political changes in the school community

Inclusive education demands the active engagement of multiple perspectives in an ongoing examination and debate about teaching and learning and the quality of schooling. There is little doubt that it is the school leaders, teachers, families, and others directly connected with the issues and challenges of schooling that are best placed to investigate their specific circumstances and to develop innovative solutions for improving and ensuring good inclusive practices (Deppeler, in press).

This process necessarily needs to involve educators in engaging with the general public and with politicians to help them understand how the principles of inclusive education and equity enact with broader educational reform and political changes in the their community. The majority of reform change that has impacted education over the past three decades arises from neoliberal economic theory as opposed to educational theory (Laitsch, 2013). A broader approach is required "... if educators want to "regain control" ... and initiate positive change as well as respond to current neoliberal reform proposals" (Laitsch, 2013, p. 24). Overcoming the challenges of inclusive education to achieve equity in schooling will require collaboration with other professionals to advocate for change and to build infrastructure to support it.

There remains a significant gap between highest and lowest performing students. It is reported (Gonski, 2011) that this performance gap is far greater in Australia than in many countries, including those with high-performing schooling systems. A concerning proportion of Australia's lowest performing students are not meeting minimum standards of achievement. There is also an unacceptable link between low levels of achievement and educational disadvantage, particularly among students from low socioeconomic and Indigenous backgrounds." (Gonski, 2011, p. XIII).

Aligning teacher education programs with inclusive education policy initial teacher education

"Quality teaching is essential to student learning and quality initial teacher education is critical to creating a high-quality teaching workforce" (AITSL, 2013, p. 1). There are now national standards in place for teacher education and universities must demonstrate that the content of their programs fully address those standards for their programs to be accredited. Although framed by these recent moves in national teacher education standards in Australia, there are obvious variations in the curriculum of teacher education programs that address teachers' capacity to respond to diversity in inclusive classrooms.

Further, it is critical to ensure that programs are also assisting in reducing concerns (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). In this regard, particular attention will need to be paid to the practice-based aspects of teacher education (Shaddock, et al., 2007). Research in this area suggests that one aspect where teacher education programs fail most is in preparation of pre-service teachers to apply skills they have acquired in university classrooms (Forlin, 2010; 2010a). These teachers need to spend considerable time in real classroom settings to apply the theoretical skills during the course of teacher education.

Teacher education as professional learning

While much public debate and inclusive education research focuses on the importance of initial teacher education, the connection between initial teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning is recognised. Teachers who experience high-quality initial preparation are more likely to seek ongoing opportunities to improve in their practice and engage in professional development throughout their careers (Scheerens, 2010). As indicated earlier in this report, new educational reforms such as inclusive education demand new skills and abilities from teachers. For in-service teachers, it is essential that effective professional learning opportunities are provided to enable them to gain these competencies. A review of the research on professional development (PD) for in-service teachers on inclusive education published between 2000 and 2009 was undertaken by Waitoller and Artiles (2013). They highlighted the critical nature of school systems to have the capacity to nurture and develop teachers who have the knowledge and ability to provide quality educational access, participation, and outcomes for all students. Yet they reported that "... most PD research for inclusive education utilised a unitary approach toward difference and exclusion and that teacher learning for inclusive education is undertheorised" (p. 29).

Individualised professional learning through consultation, based around classroom practice, was found by Stephenson, Carter, and Arthur-Kelly (2011) to increase the opportunities teachers offered to their students. Shaddock (2006) posited that teachers want practical, context-relevant input and they appreciate the contributions of expert consultants, but suggests teachers also like to learn from other teachers. Indeed, teacher collaboration in professional learning has been identified as effective for changing and improving teachers' practices (Desimone et al 2002; Grossman et al, 2001; Little, 2002; Lachance and Confrey, 2003; Vescio, 2008), and as a structure for professional development (Chappuis, et al, 2009; Deppeler, 2010; Dufour et al. 2008).

According to Slee (2010), though, professional development programs for teachers continue to struggle to provide effective input as exclusion tends to be ubiquitous. Based on an extensive critical analysis of research, an intersectional approach was proposed by Waitoller and Artiles (2013) as a means to examine teacher learning for inclusive education by focusing on different perspectives of difference and exclusion and boundary practices.

As inclusive education is a social justice endeavor, it follows that it necessarily involves multiple persons and perspectives in an ongoing debate about what is important; including those who are directly involved in the practice. It has been suggested that university-school collaboration in research and professional collaboration across education, health, and social sectors, provides opportunities for teacher professional learning and for developing innovative solutions to the challenges of inclusive education and that "Genuine collaboration in practice-based research acknowledges the professional expertise of teachers and other professionals and respects local understandings and research agendas" (Deppeler, in press, p. 180).

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Appendices

Appendix A

The *Index* for Inclusion

Booth, T., & Ainscow, M. (Revised 2011). The *Index* for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools. Retrieved from :
<http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/current.shtml#schoolsindex2011>

According to Booth and Ainscow the *Index for Inclusion* is "...a set of materials to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development. It is about building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students".

The *Index* can be used to:

- "adopt a self-review approach to analyse their cultures, policies and practices and to identify the barriers to learning and participation that may occur within each of these areas.
- decide their own priorities for change and to evaluate their progress.
- use it as an integral part of existing development policies, encouraging a wide and deep scrutiny of everything that makes up a school's activities".

"The *Index* takes the social model of disability as its starting point, builds on good practice, and then organises the *Index* work around a cycle of activities which guide schools through the stages of preparation, investigation, development and review".

The materials are organised for the three dimensions. Within each section there are up to eleven indicators with the meaning of each indicator clarified by a series of questions. For example, here are the indicators for two aspects of creating inclusive cultures:

Indicators for DIMENSION A Creating inclusive cultures

A.1 Building community

Indicators:

- A.1.1 Everyone is made to feel welcome.
- A.1.2 Students help each other.
- A.1.3 Staff collaborate with each other.
- A.1.4 Staff and students treat one another with respect.
- A.1.5 There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers.
- A.1.6 Staff and governors work well together.
- A.1.7 All local communities are involved in the school.

A.2 Establishing inclusive values

Indicators:

- A.2.1 There are high expectations for all students.
- A.2.2 Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion.
- A.2.3 Students are equally valued.
- A.2.4 Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a 'role'.
- A.2.5 Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.
- A.2.6 The school strives to minimise discriminatory practice.

Appendix B

Overview of inclusive education policy in an example of seven international regions

Victoria, Australia

Policy and implementation level	State level.
Main policy document	Program for Students with disability http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/needs/psd_guidelines.pdf
Definition of inclusive education	Not dissimilar to the Alberta, Canada, definition in Victoria "The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department) is committed to delivering an inclusive education system that ensures all students have access to a quality education that meets their diverse needs." This does not imply commitment to full inclusion in ordinary, neighbourhood schools. The Victorian policy defers to the Education Standards of the federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
Student identification	Students are categorised under seven different categories of disability which require medical evidence for their presence. These include physical and intellectual disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, and others.
Funding approach	The Program for Students with disability is a targeted supplementary funding program for Victorian government schools. It provides resources to schools for a defined student population of students with disability, with moderate to severe needs. Under the program, resources are provided directly to Victorian government schools to support the provision of school-based educational programs for eligible students with disability.
Segregated special education	A mixture of services exists including segregated special schools, home-based programs, and inclusive education.
Inclusive education features	Supports such as teacher assistants, additional resources, specialist consultants, etc. may be available.
Parent involvement	A collaborative approach between parents and school staff is encouraged, with potential roles for each described.
Curriculum issues	Students may follow the regular curriculum, a modified version, or an individual plan.

Alberta, Canada

Policy and implementation level	Provincial level.
Main policy document	Standards on Special Education (2004). Currently, a government initiative 'Action on Inclusion' is the focus of work in this area. http://education.alberta.ca/departments/ipr/settingthedirection.aspx
Definition of inclusive education	According to the Government of Alberta "The goal of an inclusive education system is to provide all students with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities for them to best achieve their potential.". This includes segregated forms of education. "For some students it means grouped programs based on specific needs; for others it means being in class with their age peers and having their instruction modified within the Alberta Programs of Study. For others, it's a mix of these two experiences or other options."
Student identification	A process known as 'coding' individual students based on disability and/or giftedness is used. Tests, including IQ tests, are used to assist in this process.
Funding approach	The Provincial Government provides block funding to school jurisdictions based on disability demographics and coding. Districts typically distribute resources to schools based on the number and severity of 'coded students' in each school.
Segregated special education	A continuum of services exists including segregated special schools, special classes in neighbourhood schools, inclusive education, and home schooling options.
Inclusive education features	Inclusive education is to be the first placement option considered by school districts, and therefore local schools. Supports such as teacher assistants, additional resources, specialist consultants, etc. may be available at the discretion of the local school district and most commonly the individual school.
Parent involvement	Parent involvement and cooperation is encouraged. Parents are supposed to be active partners in their child's education. Parent involvement in individual education plans is required.
Curriculum issues	Alberta has one curriculum for all children, although some children with special education needs follow an individual education plan (known as an IPP).

Finland

Policy and implementation level	National level.
Main policy document	The Basic Education Act (2010) with amendments. Strategy on Special Needs Education (2007). http://www.oph.fi/english/education/special_educational_support/special_needs_education
Definition of inclusive education	According to the Basic Education Act "special education is provided within the context of usual instruction or partially or fully in special class or in other appropriate place." The Strategy on Special Needs Education expresses a preference for support to be provided in neighbourhood schools.
Student identification	Additional support requirements are determined in the first instance by teacher/parent observation. After consulting with the special education teacher, and preferably the school psychologist, the IEP team defines the needed services together with parents and the student as part of the IEP process. (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2010).
Funding approach	Students eligible for full-time support might expect to receive 1.5 times base funding and a relatively small proportion of students with severe disability may receive between 2.5 to 4 times base funding. Every municipality and every school decides independently how they use their own funding allocation. Typically it is used for hiring special teachers and teaching aides (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2010).
Segregated special education	In segregated special schools support is provided in curriculum differentiation, guidance, social services, remedial teaching, part-time special education, assistive devices, learner support assistants, and psycho-social services (Väyrynen).
Inclusive education features	Two types of inclusive education support are provided. They are GENERAL SUPPORT (curriculum differentiation, guidance, social services, remedial teaching, part-time special education, assistive devices, learner support assistants, and psycho-social services). In addition there is INTENSIFIED SUPPORT provided in the same areas (Väyrynen).
Parent involvement	
Curriculum issues	National core curriculum for all schools. Individual Learning Plans are used for those requiring extra support.

Italy

Policy and implementation level	National level.
Main policy document	Integrazione Scholastica (see also law 104) http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/disabilita .
Definition of inclusive education	Pedagogical attempts made by made by specialised personnel to respond to the needs of vulnerable minorities with the allocation and re-distribution of extra resources to regular schools.
Student identification	Assessments of students using various instruments resulting in 'certification of handicap'. A new classification tool the 'International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health' is being adopted that has a greater focus on the relationship between functioning and environment.
Funding approach	Individual students are funded based on information contained in their 'certificate of handicap'.
Segregated special education	Very few segregated special education settings exist.
Inclusive education features	97.8% of students with disability are educated in inclusive schools. Supports such as 'support teachers' who are qualified teachers working in classrooms at a national average ratio of 1:2, additional resources, specialist consultants, etc. may be available.
Parent involvement	According to the Italian Constitution parents and the State are co-responsible for the education of minors. Parents are therefore expected to be enablers in their child's education.
Curriculum issues	IEPs are used in combination with the national curriculum which is the same for all until age 13, when exams are taken and children are streamed.

Cook Islands

Policy and implementation level	National level.
Main policy document	Towards an inclusive society: Cook Islands inclusive education policy, 2011 http://www.education.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=291&Itemid=44 .

Definition of inclusive education	"Inclusive Education is about changing the system to suit the needs of all children." Further "Key principles of Inclusive Education include: 2.3.1 Humility: - in order to value all students, staff, parents and other stakeholders equally. 2.3.2 Belief: - that ALL children have a right to education. 2.3.3 Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality. Schooling is in partnership with wider community of stakeholders. 2.3.4 Recognising individual potential and respecting differences- where differences are valued as a resource to support learning rather than problems to be overcome. 2.3.5 Restructuring school cultures, policies and practices to meet the needs of ALL students in their locality. 2.3.6 Personalised educational programmes negotiated between community/parents/stakeholders. 2.3.7 Inclusivity: - a spirit of working together that ensures that everyone including ALL students and stakeholders (parents, caregivers, teachers, management, PTA etc) feel that they belong and their views and values are respected. Where no one should be discriminated or segregated by school policies and/or organisation methods/rules that are based solely on one or a combination of the following:-gender, geographical location, economic background, level of ability, religious beliefs, impairment or disability.
Student identification	Ten separate categories of disability exist, along with disability, and students are categorised accordingly.
Funding approach	
Segregated special education	Segregated special education exists but can only be utilised under conditions monitored by the Secretary of Education.
Inclusive education features	Inclusive education is the first option. Segregated special education exists but can only be utilised under conditions monitored by the Secretary of Education. Supports include consultants, teacher education, a multi-disciplinary approach, teaching assistants, extra resources.
Parent involvement	Families are included in the process and have support plans drawn up to assist them known as 'Individual Family Support Plans'.
Curriculum issues	The regular Cook Islands National Curriculum or IEPs are used.

Ukraine

Policy and implementation level	National level.
Main policy document	Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from 15.08.2011 #872 On Approval of Organisation of Inclusive Education in the Primary and Secondary Schools.
Definition of inclusive education	"Educational services are provided to children with special educational needs by the regular schools in the inclusive classrooms, where child-centered teaching methods are used with the consideration of individual needs of the children."
Student identification	A regional board, known as Psychological Medical Pedagogical Consultations (PMPC) takes into account medical, psychological, and pedagogical evaluations and does make decisions as to the educational placement of children with disability. Inclusive education is typically not seen as an option if disability is in evidence. (Loreman et al., under review).
Funding approach	A national inclusive education funding system is not yet in place. Funding is provided to schools by regional authorities supporting inclusive education.
Segregated special education	Education of children with disability typically takes place in specialised boarding schools known as 'internats'. Even those who have only physical disability are required to study under special curricula in a special boarding school (internat). Those curricula were designed according to the 8 major categories, such as intellectual disability and mental retardation, hearing disorders (deaf and hard-of-hearing children), eyesight disorders (blind and visually-impaired children), speech disorders, and muscular-skeleton disorders.
Inclusive education features	Vary significantly according to local practice.
Parent involvement	Currently, parent involvement is at the discretion of the individual school, although policy does specify IEP involvement.
Curriculum issues	Until recently any curriculum modification has been illegal. This has recently changed to allow for individualised programming through IEPs.

United Kingdom

Policy and implementation level	National level.
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Main policy document	The SEN Code of Practice (Currently under review) and statutory guidance "Inclusive schooling: Children with special educational needs". http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/sen/a00218772/sen-code-of-practice. http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213163/inclusive-schooling-children-sen.
Definition of inclusive education	"Inclusion is about engendering a sense of community and belonging and encouraging mainstream and special schools and others to come together to support each other and pupils with special educational needs. Inclusive schools and local education authorities have: a. an inclusive ethos; b. a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils; c. systems for early identification of barriers to learning and participation; and d. high expectations and suitable targets for all children." There is no commitment in policy or legislation to full inclusion of all students in the UK.
Student identification	Students are issued with a 'statement of special educational needs' following an assessment or series of assessments. The areas of need in which children are assessed include communication and interaction, cognition and learning, behaviour, emotional and social development, sensory and/or physical.
Funding approach	Maintained schools, other than special schools, should have within their delegated budget some funding that reflects the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs. They receive this through a funding formula that reflects the incidence of SEN measured in various ways.
Segregated special education	Special schools exist throughout the UK specialising in various disability groupings according to categories identified.
Inclusive education features	Inclusive education is preferable and can be demanded by parents, who may be refused only on the grounds of strict criteria. Supports such as teacher assistants, additional resources, specialist consultants, etc. may be available at the discretion of the local school district and most commonly the individual school.
Parent involvement	Parents hold key information and have a critical role to play in their children's education. Chapter 2 of the SEN Code of Practice underlines that it is essential that all professionals. Chapter 2 of the SEN Code of Practice underlines that it is essential that all professionals actively seek to work with parents and value the contribution they make.
Curriculum issues	Children identified with SEN can work on the regular national curriculum and/or from IEPs.

Appendix C

UNESCO (2009). *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. France: Author.

According to UNESCO (2009), "The policy guidelines present some of the many issues that need to be addressed to appropriately position inclusive education in the policy cycle. The suggested actions present a holistic approach to changing the entire education system". Retrieved from : <http://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/iea/>

The 13 areas of policy concern:

1. Analysis and diagnosis of needs must proceed the formulation of policies and plans.
2. Systems and methods of collecting education-related data are necessary to inform policy and practice.
3. Policies and plans must be pro-poor and stress the rights basis for inclusion
4. Policies have rather unclear definitions. Inclusive education is seen primarily in terms of disability and 'special needs'.
5. Allocating funding to inclusive education is a challenge.
6. Inclusive education is mainly presented as a set of separate interventions for different groups of learners.
7. An holistic education system requires an information flow among professionals at different levels as well as between the school and families
8. Access to school buildings and curriculum.
9. Improving quality in education is not given as much attention as increasing enrolment rates and access.
10. Curriculum reform needs to be more prominent and involve relevant stakeholders in the development of new and revised curricula.
11. Teacher education is often discussed in detail but not addressed in the context of promoting diversity .
12. Capacity development is important at all levels of the education system.
13. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary to improve planning and implementation.

The 51 suggested inclusive policy actions

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| A 1 | Promote innovative programmes and support the community in its capacity to identify out-of-school children, youth and adults in order to get them into school and other education or training programmes. |
| A 2 | Involve communities in services that reach out to adults in need of education. |
| A 3 | Engage schools and communities in; mapping households and identifying out-of school children; and enrolment campaigns and community mobilisation in partnership with local leaders. |

- A 4 Provide support for mechanisms at local levels that aim at reaching out to children, youth and adults currently deprived of education.
- B 1 Build appropriate data systems at the national level.
- B 2 Encourage use of household surveys.
- B 3 Strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to collect data.
- B 4 Involve local communities in data collection.
- C 1 Ensure national legislation is in line with international conventions.
- C 2 Ensure policies reflect rights-based and pro-poor approaches, and target disadvantaged children.
- C 3 Support programmes for youth and adults.
- D 1 Conduct awareness campaigns via media, posters, conferences and training.
- D 2 Involve communities and local leaders.
- E 1 Ensure effective planning and budgeting in the education sector and with other sectors of society.
- E 2 Decentralise the use of funds within the education system.
- E 3 Ensure that ECCE-related funding from different ministerial budgets (social, health education, etc.) is coordinated.
- E 4 Ensure budget allocations support currently excluded groups.
- E 5 Allow flexible use of funds to support activities for inclusive schools, education and /or training programmes.
- F 1 Ensure cross-sectoral planning for education.
- F 2 Develop long-term policies for economic and social development to achieve and sustain inclusive education objectives.
- F 3 Strengthen ECCE provisions, linking them to inclusive approaches.
- F 4 Involve the private sector in supporting education.
- G 1 Initiate meetings among staff to discuss and define roles and areas of cooperation.
- G 2 Provide information on activities and experiences gained at lower levels.
- G 3 Encourage sharing experiences through staff exchange.
- H 1 Governments must ensure transport to and from schools, when needed.
- H 2 Encourage schools to build their own ramps and improve sanitary conditions.
- H 3 Provide incentives for the construction of accessible schools and elicit support from the private sector.
- I 1 Adopt methods to assess learning outcomes.

- I 2 Improve teaching methods.
- I 3 Take account of cognition and cognitive development.
- I 4 Ensure effective use of resources.
- J 1 Provide support when needed and make curricula open and flexible, allowing for different learning styles and content that makes the curriculum relevant to learners and society.
- J 2 Involve the local community in teaching in local languages.
- J 3 Include issues on early childhood programmes in the curriculum to secure easy transition.
- J 4 Ensure that curricula do not focus only on academic skills.
- J 5 Encourage new methods and ways of learning.
- J 6 Initiate discussions in schools about teaching and learning processes.
- K 1 Improve pre- and in-service training, mentorship, team-building.
- K 2 Provide teacher education for teachers at early grades and early literacy.
- K 3 Promote the use of new and alternative methods for teaching.
- K 4 Encourage methods for planning education based on individual educational needs.
- K 5 Encourage teachers to organise their work in teams and to apply problem-oriented teaching methods as well as paying respect to diversities and different learning styles among their pupils.
- K 6 Set up work with groups of mixed abilities to facilitate peer tutoring among pupils.
- K 7 Encourage the use of new technology and ICT.
- L 1 Initiate the elaboration of capacity development plans for educational staff both at national, regional and local levels.
- L 2 Develop a set of criteria for the requirements of capacities needed for school managers, inspectors and teachers.
- M 1 Develop systems for monitoring and evaluation that relate to all levels (national, regional, local and private).
- M 2 Improve monitoring and evaluation of performance at schools and in non-formal education programmes.
- M 3 Train and involve school heads and inspectors in assessment and evaluation.
- M 4 Early identification of children at the risk of dropping out followed by analysis of the factors and conditions that constitutes this situation should be part of all evaluations.

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