How Much Is Your School Inclusive?
Ideas from the Multinclude Project

Eleonora Pantò[1], Enrica Bricchetto[2], Alberto Barbero[3]

Associazione Dschola, Italy[1], ITIS Avogadro, Italy[2], IIS Vallauri, Italy[3]

Abstract

The Multinclude project aims to define educational inclusion policies to realize a pathway to success up to university for all students and especially those at risk of exclusion (minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, in poverty, etc).

The Multinclude project collected around 70 good practices of inclusions worldwide and through an analysis process based on a different theoretical framework, like inclusive excellence and super-diversity. The analysis report allowed the project to identify several inclusion dimensions and to design the multiclude inclusion matrix.

Replying to a set of questions, the inclusion matrix will return, in a visual way, the position of the school concerning the seven inclusion dimensions. The final objective is to engage education institutions in putting in place corrective actions.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Diversity, Policy, Matrix, Toolkit, MOOC*

1. Introduction

One of Europe's characteristics is the concept of diversity: there are 225 languages spoken in Europe, and of these 60 are minority languages, but this diversification is further increasing.

Migration and globalization are causing social changes that create new opportunities and challenges for educational institutions. The growing number of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant children lead schools and teachers to reinvent daily practices and strategies to respond to new learning needs. Following the Euryidice Report [1] "A student who is well-integrated into the education system both academically and socially has more chance of reaching their potential. Students from migrant backgrounds, however, face several challenges in this respect that can affect their learning and development."

According to OECD PISA [2] data, students who have a history of first and second-generation migration have worse school outcomes than their peers, a disadvantage also shared by historical ethnic and linguistic minorities from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds: language problems and monocultural programs can bring these students to drop out from school

The kids who cannot acquire knowledge and skills today will be marginalized workers that will probably feed the so-called gig-economy tomorrow.

Education systems of respective European countries were not designed for the current population. In superdiverse cities like Paris, The Hague and Brussels there is no majority anymore. These are so-called majority-minority cities [3]. The population in these cities consist of all minority groups. The previous majority also became a quantitative minority. Quantitative diversity is not a guarantee for equal opportunities in education and at the labour market.

The increasing diversity in European countries required a vision on inclusion and inspirational practices for supporting institution to grant education equity. There is a great need to successfully implement tested models of inclusive practices within schools and learning communities, to achieve the impact on an individual, institutional and systematic level. Previous analysis [4] showed the importance of initiatives not only funded by the governments to support inclusion: Universities, NGO, local communities and student associations are promoting new approaches and finding creative solutions, through different types of informal education, for instance supporting homework or learning the local language, providing room for intercultural dialogue or more structured initiatives like children's universities

2. The Multinclude project

The Multinclude project (www.multinclude.eu), created thanks to the support of the Erasmus + Program, is designed to seek, promote and disseminate the good practices that have been developed in several parts of the world, especially in Europe. The goal is to identify proven ideas and practices that have the potential to be implemented with small investments and that can be spread, replicated and are scalable as needed

Once the best ideas have been identified, the project means to spread the methodologies to which they do reference to incorporate them in the inclusion strategies of schools, as well as in the training of teachers across Europe to improve their approach to inclusion issues. The project is based on two very precise assumptions: firstly, starting from the multitude of initiatives managed by individual schools, NGOs and Universities that have proven successful in improving participation inclusive to education; secondly, respond to requests from schools and other institutions of education to know and implement future initiatives to improve their inclusion strategies starting from good practices already consolidated over time

Figure 1 Multinclude homepage

The DSchola Association is the Italian partner of the Multinclude project, created thanks to the support of the Erasmus + program, together with six other European institutions: The Hague University of Applied Sciences, The Knowledge Innovation Center, ECHO Expertisecentrum Diversiteitsbeleid, Malmö University, Vienna University Children's Office, European School Heads Association.

3. The collection and the analysis of the cases

The project started by collecting inclusion initiatives adopting evidence-based methodology. The collected cases aimed at reducing non-equity towards under-represented groups (for origin, socio-economic condition, health conditions). The focus of the project is aimed at completion by disadvantaged groups of higher education; a path that involves all degrees of education, starting from kindergarten, including formal, informal and non-formal education.

More than 70 initiatives have been selected on the theme of educational inclusion, which can be found on the site, using tags or full-text research. These "cases" tell stories of long-staying hospitalized children, students with disabilities, "complicated" schoolchildren with behavioural disorders, young adults who need to overcome the obstacle of the language of a new country to stay or find a job, of the difficult living together between different cultures, the difficulty of finding your way around after school, of making friends when you don't know each other.

The following step of the project was the analysis of the cases, based on multiple contextual dimensions of inclusion in education. The partners of the project decided to adopt the following parameters in the analysis of the cases considered:

- to be independent of possible policy changes and to be an integral part of the main activities of the institutions and regions;
- have measurable results and successful qualitative outcomes;
- be efficient and effective so that they can be replicated in a short time and with resources limited;
- be innovative in their implementation, content, political and regional context or mission and vision;
- touching on sensitive issues that are part of initiatives to reduce inequalities in society;
- support the visibility and success of previously unrecognised groups.

The partners then selected seven significant cases for further analysis to find commonalities, synergies and specificities to support the development of best practices of inclusion at the European level. The in-depth analysis of the seven cases has adopted the "Theory of Change" scheme which, at starting with the problem, goes so far as to define the long-term impact.

The report [5] provides a cross-cutting analysis of these practices, focusing on three types of changes to improve inclusion in schools: strategic administrative actions, changes curricula and pedagogical changes. It also points out that successful cases, while having clear results and measurable according to their original objectives, usually also have an element of unexpected impact on better inclusion.

All 72 cases have been assessed according to the different learning conditions, taking into account consideration of aspects such as the social context, physical and pedagogical environments. The report also highlights some important positive aspects for learning and inclusion that are defined and linked to the different cases, such as filling gaps, social skills, language and learning through a holistic approach. One-third of the programmes receive public funding, one third from educational institutions and one third from foundations or private sponsors. The analysis highlights the great diversity of the target groups, the increasing commitment to inclusive education underlined by the fact that in recent years there has been a growing number of initiatives. The case studies were also divided into groups according to their primary objectives: prevention, intervention and/or compensation.

The fact that almost a third of the cases have been initiated or implemented exclusively in the field of education with the ultimate objective of better school inclusion highlights the importance for the schools to implement an open approach, of collaboration with their internal and external stakeholders to achieve the goal of inclusive, quality education.

4. The Multinclude inclusion matrix

The result of the analysis work has identified 7 dimensions and 4 areas of intervention for inclusion that are summarised in the so-called "inclusion matrix". The four areas identified are:

- Social Development and Intellectual,
- Educational Resources,
- Cultural Differences
- School Environment

The seven dimensions are

- Admission and access,
- Social interaction,
- Support for students and participants,
- Administration,
- Teaching,
- Extracurricular and community support activities,
- Assessment and recognition.

Every dimension is made of about twenty questions, to make it easier for schools to analyze their inclusion policies, starting a reflection to try to identify their grey areas.

For facilitating the schools, the partners, including Dschola Association, organized workshops, aimed at illustrating the matrix and encourage educational institutions to implement their vision of inclusion, based on its context. Schools are asked to define their "mission statement" and to commit themselves in enhancing their inclusion policy.

The Multinclude inclusion matrix is provided with a toolkit for organizing workshops in the schools and it is available on the website for download.

The partners of the project started to organise in presence workshop with the schools but due to the Covid19 emergency, it was impossible to continue and some webinars were organized instead. Moreover, to support schools in adopting the Multinclude inclusion matrix an online version is available on the project website: this tool allows to answer to the questions of the matrix and accessing a result dashboard.
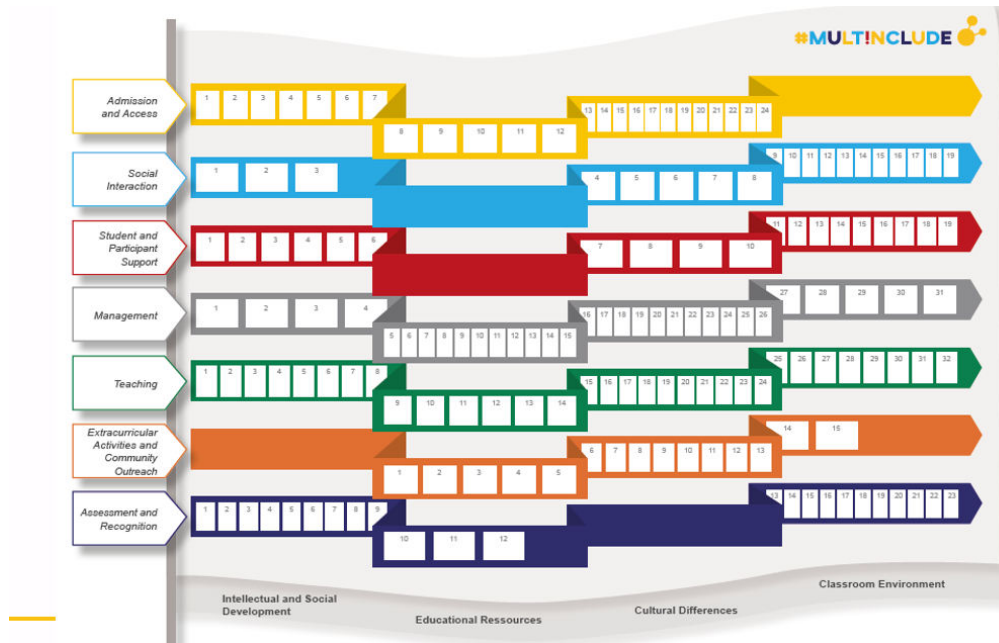
Figure 2 The Multinclude Inclusion Matrix

5. Further developments

The project organized webinars to give voice to the protagonists to promote and disseminate the best experiences: the records of the webinars can be reached at this address https://multinclude.eu/webinar-series/

Moreover, you can subscribe to the free MOOC, "Pathways to inclusive education" (Pathways for inclusive education) hosted on the platform of the University of Malmo to learn about inclusive education and on inclusion theories.

We invite those interested in improving their inclusion practices on a personal level, professional or institutional or intends to propose further practices of inclusion, to enrol in our learning community to continue our dialogue there: https://multinclude.eu/learningcommunity/

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