



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Study visit group report

Group	238	
Title	Including pupils with disabilities – a flexible continuum of provision	
Theme	05 (Equal opportunities for disadvantaged students in education and vocational training systems)	
City, Country	London, GB	
Type of visit	Study visit	
Dates	March 16 th to 20 th 2009	
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Findings

The eleven study visit participants came from ten countries. They all work in the field of special educational needs, disability and inclusion. Some members worked in national institutions, some at regional level and some in local schools.

In each country similar issues are being debated such as how far inclusion should go, can mainstream schooling meet all children's needs what types of pedagogy best support these children and how can disabled children gain equality in school and in society.

During the week we visited a number of schools, some mainstream, some additionally resourced provision and some special schools. The three most important things we learnt were

- Different ways of meeting the needs of pupils with severe disabilities.
- The need to prepare the mainstream school system to accept pupils with disabilities. The role of SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) in promoting inclusion in the schools.
- The need for flexible and pragmatic implementation of inclusion measures.

In the special schools we saw and talked about the need to provide a sheltered environment with specialist staff so that pupils with severe special needs and disabilities could learn and enjoy school. We also discussed the need to prepare these children to go out into the community, mix with other children and have as much independence as possible in adult life.

In the mainstream schools the SENCOs had an important role in advising and supporting other teachers, sharing specialist knowledge and expertise, guiding Teaching Assistants and working with parents. The SENCO conference on Including Autism Spectrum Pupils which we attended showed us how the English national government is trying to increase skills of teachers in mainstream. The SENCOs will lead in spreading this work in their schools. The SENCOs are supported by specialist teachers and therapists and educational psychologists. The role of SENCO does not exist in all the countries represented.

The different schools that we visited showed that at times children may be able to manage in mainstream but later may benefit from a move to special school. In the additionally resourced provision there was some flexibility with inclusion in mainstream for lessons and more for social activities matched to individual children's needs. The system allows parent to choose from the different models what best suits their child at any stage in their education. Children with medical and physical needs were able to study in the mainstream classes and take exams but return during the day to the special base for physiotherapy and medication.

Good practices

title of the project/programme/initiative /...	name of the institution that implements it (website)	contact person (if possible), who presented the programme to the group	whom the project/programme/initiative addresses	what features of the project/programme/initiative make it an example of good practice
Professional Development for teachers	Haringey PDC	Kirstie Watkins	Special Needs Educators	Coordinating SENCOs work, providing training and specialist advice to SENCOs and enabling SENCOs to coordinate inclusion activities in each school.
Initial teacher training Programme	University of London (Institute of Education) and Teachers development Agency	Nick Peacey	Trainee teachers	Using the TDA (Teachers Development Agency) training resource for initial teacher training. Improving knowledge and skills of all teachers about Special Needs and disabilities and the use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies

Common approaches

Inclusion strategy is spreading across the whole of Europe. Special schools versus mainstream schools are being discussed. Preparing for independent adult life is the common focus. Every country tries to find a way to apply the laws in the local schools and practice. Most countries represented are trying to ensure that Disability equality laws become reality in education.

Common challenges:

Attitudes in society in general and in education in particular toward inclusion and pupils with special educational needs are a challenge in all our countries . With lack of teachers with education and competence in special educational needs there is a challenge for us all around training and supporting mainstream teachers.

Funding and resources are limited in most countries. Central government laws and initiatives are not always carried out at a local level.

All participants discussed the need to create a system in order to exchange knowledge, information and practices.

Assessment practices for SEN make it difficult for all pupils to get a certificate that can give access to further education and work. There is a need to develop useful assessment practice for this group of pupils.

In Haringey we saw a great diversity and mobility in the population with many children living in areas of social and economic deprivation. This varied across our countries but was a common challenge for us all to some degree. In some cases it is a city environment and in some rural poverty is a problem.

Effective and innovative solutions

One solution that we saw on the visit is the building capacity in the schools to enable them to take ownership of the problems and find their own solutions.

Sometimes solutions for individual cases can be applied to a broader group of pupils. For example we saw in schools that good resources such as visual timetables help lots of children to work more effectively in the classroom. What is good for SEN is good for everyone.

Early identification and planning for the pupils with SEN is essential so that good provision can be put in place. Better solutions will be found when including parents and children in decision making about their education.

The whole school community needs to be involved in pupils with SEN and have education and competence in working with pupils with SEN.

Policies and practices that can be further explored:

Initial teacher training programmes should include an element regarding SEN practices. Ongoing training should be given to teachers during their careers to keep them up to date with new developments in SEN and disability.

National plans should be linked to the training programmes at the local level.

The role of the SENCO could be transferred to other countries the way it has been done in UK.

All countries could provide an incremental approach to interventions in special education so that parents and pupils can make choices which best suit their personal needs.

Future cooperation

Individual members of the study group have made contact with special schools in Haringey and will correspond with these schools to share resources and ideas. For example one member, a Headteacher from Poland, met Polish pupils and teaching Assistants in a special school and exchanged addresses in order to look at the possibility of setting up a school link

All participants have been given access to the Institute of Education (University of London) and TDA (Teachers Development Agency) website training resource for initial teacher training. They will look at these resources with colleagues in their countries and give feedback on the materials.

Members of the group worked well together and will continue to share ideas by email and if possible to set up visits to each other

Visit programme

Including pupils with disabilities - a flexible continuum of provision.

March 16th to March 20th 2009 – Haringey , London

Monday, March 16th

- 8-45 Meet at Turnpike Lane Underground Station –Walk to PDC
- 9-00 Welcome to Haringey including address by Peter Lewis – Director Children and Young People’s Service
- 10-00 Participants presentations
- 11-00 Coffee break
- 11-30 SEN and Disability education in England
- 12-00 Lunch with Special School Headteachers and Local Authority Staff
- 13-00 Visits to mainstream school – meet SENCOs , observe groups/classes
- 15-30 Return to PDC – Questions /Discussion / Report writing
- 19-30 Meal at Penang Satay House, 9 Turnpike Lane

Tuesday, March 17th

- 9-00 Meet at PDC
- 9-30 Participants presentations
- 10-00 Supporting pupils with SEN and Disability in mainstream schools
- 11-00 Coffee break
- 11-30 Training and supporting school staff and parents
- 12-00 Lunch
- 13-00 Resourced provisions in Haringey
- 13-30 Visits to Resourced provisions
- 15-30 Finish

Wednesday, March 18th

- 9-00 Meet at PDC
- 9-15 Attend Autism conference
- 12-00 Lunch
- 14-00 Meet at Holborn Underground Station for Walking Tour
- 16-00 Finish

Thursday, March 19th

9-00 Meet at Hotel
9-30 Visit to Institute of Education
10-30 Return to PDC
11-00 About our Special Schools
12-00 Lunch
13-00 Visits to Special Schools
15-30 Finish
19-00 Meal in central London

Friday, March 20th

9-00 Meet at PDC
9-15 Meeting with Kevin Robinson, Head of Transversal Study Visits, UK
10-00 Visit to Special Schools
12-30 Lunch
13-30 Report writing
14-00 Round up session, certificates
14-30 Finish