MultInclude – Supporting Schools in Improving their Inclusion Strategies

Eszter Salamon¹, Mary Tupan Wenno², Josefien van Marlen³, Simone Aumaj⁴

¹ European School Heads Association, Parents International, Otto van der Leckstraat St. 4, 5321HZ Hedel, Netherlands, director@parentsinternational
² ECHO Centre for Diversity Policy, Netherlands
³ ECHO Centre for Diversity Policy, Netherlands
⁴ ECHO Centre for Diversity Policy, Netherlands

Abstract. Inclusion in education has been a hot topic all over Europe. There have been various attempts to develop inclusion strategies for different groups, such as for the inclusion of disabled students, newly arrived migrants, those with special needs and others. MultInclude, an Erasmus+ project ESHA is a partner of, has focused on the multiple inclusion needs of students having in mind the completion of secondary education and continuation of studies at tertiary level. In short, what we are aiming at is educating lifelong learners by catering for the individual inclusion needs of each student. The project has two research aspect that will be presented: first there were over 70 inclusion case studies collected from all over the world and analysed for finding the “best” in best practices, secondly, based in this a self-assessment tool was developed and piloted in over 50 schools in various European countries and the experiences of these pilots have also been analysed.

Praise for MultInclude and the Scoring Matrix:

“I love it when complex concepts are translated into hands-on processes. And so, I’m a big fan of the MultInclude project’s tool for self-assessing #inclusion within schools.” – Mari Varsányi, teacher, trainer and consultant specialising on Intercultural and Inclusive Education, the Netherlands.

Keywords: MultInclude, inclusive education.
The consortium

The work was carried out in the framework of a project funded through the Erasmus+ KA3 scheme by consortium of 7 partners from 6 countries. While the European School Heads Association provided the work’s direct link to daily school practice, other partners brought in their inclusion experience with higher education (ECHO, The University of Applied Sciences in the Hague and Malmö University), two other partners provided input on digital inclusion and non-formal education (Knowledge Innovation Centre Malta and DSchola Italy).

Theory of change

All cases that are part of the #Multinclude database are considered good practices of inclusive education; yet some show interesting potential for implementation in different contexts. Out of all 70 cases, there are seven important cases that are exceptional and are therefore analysed in depth. The level of effectivity of these seven cases was be analysed through the methodological framework of the “Theory of Change” (ToC). This methodological tool is used by many different organizations ranging from governmental bodies to (large) corporates and NGO’s to support the processes of policy and project development. However, ToC was initially developed as an evaluation tool. In this process, the ToC models outcomes – and with that, impact – in an ‘outcome pathway’ (Taplin et al., 2013). The ToC framework works as follows:

An important step in evaluating projects from the framework of the ToC is identifying what (pre-)conditions must be put in place to reach these goals. The success of this

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1 This part of the article was adapted from the MultInclude Analysis Report by ECHO colleagues
model is to be able to demonstrate progress by evaluating the outcomes as evidence to what extent the goals are achieved. Through six different questions, key assumptions will be defined that together answer the question: “What is the long-term change you see as your goal?” In this way, the ToC methodology provides a structured description and elaboration on the questions what, how and why. In doing so it shows how a specific project contributed to a desired change and how that development can be expected in a particular context. This chapter starts with a brief description of these cases and provides problem-based models of expectations for each individual case, in order to analyse what the actual impact is of these seven cases.

Research methodology

“This project has been designed around six key verbs, each associated with a set of activities: Detect, Analyse, Exchange, Impact, Multiply and Inspire to operationalize lessons learned and share the insights gained from of these different proven good practices of inclusive education with teachers, schools and universities that work with communities on inclusion issues. In this chapter we will elaborate on the process of these activities.

Template development

First, it was important to develop a template for case providers to search within the networks of all partners that are part of the consortium. The process of developing the template for interviewing the case-study providers was inspired by previous knowledge and experience within the IDEAS project. The work from that project was modified by THUAS and ECHO into the working template for #Multinclude, with the aim to improve the quality and ‘effective’ information for the user of the #Multinclude database. The aim of this template was to be able to get a broader and more thorough understanding of the context of specific cases, to be able to measure and understand the impact of the respective project or intervention. In this process, the #Multinclude template employed a case study approach described as the self-ethnography methodology, when academics study the “lived realities of” their own organizations. The idea was that case-study providers would not be asked to fill in the template, but were enabled to provide a reliable description of the national/regional/local context, the systematic and policy driven context, financial opportunities and restrictions and of course what the specific cases entail in terms of aims, process, results and impact. This ‘self-ethnography’ approach was chosen since the consortium did not have the means to research the impact of these individual cases themselves. The consortium let the case study providers describe their own projects and interventions. The outcome

2 This part of the article is a quotation of the MultInclude Analysis Report by ECHO colleagues.
was a template that structured the interview based on three types of changes: strategic administrative actions, curricular change, and pedagogical change. All submitted and published cases are described based on this elaborate template that is developed by THUAS and ECHO with input from other partners.

Detecting the cases

The first part (Detect) of the project focused on identifying cases from the networks that all partners of the consortium represent. The partners from the consortium discussed within their organization what range of cases they wanted to identify. In that process, all partners looked at different aspects of diversity: target groups, type of education, type of underrepresentation, geographical spreading, urban/rural, used theoretical and methodological frameworks, type of outcomes, type of financial and other resources, policy/practice, evidence-based, easy to implement or not, level of innovation and impact (on institutional and/or student level). The next step was to discuss with other partners from within the consortium what other cases they provided, to make sure that the entire #Multinclude database would entail many different types of projects and initiatives. This way the consortium protected the flexibility to look for cases that were missing.

Interviews

After all partners of the consortium decided what projects, they wanted to reach out to, the providers from within their network were contacted to plan an interview. In some instances, the interview was scheduled to take place face to face – with other more international cases the interview took place online. This way it was possible to collect as much information as possible, also it made it possible to immediately ask in-depth questions about the provided information. This process has been very time and labour intensive, planning the interview, doing the interviewing, transcribing the interviews and in some cases translating the interviews that were not held in English. The outcome is a database that consists of over 70 rich and informative cases, much of this information often gets lost or is not provided when case providers are asked to fill a questionnaire.

Peer-review & language check

In total, over 70 cases were collected and all cases were peer-reviewed by (in some cases even multiple) partners of the consortium to make sure that the information and data that was provided, was sufficient and understandable in order to compare and eventually come to conclusions. ESHA developed a peer review questionnaire (see attachment 2). Based on the process of peer reviewing, some partners were asked to go back to the case study providers to enrich the data of the cases and to ensure that all relevant and important information was collected. The result of the peer-reviewing process is that there are over 70 cases currently approved and published on the website.
These cases were taken into account for the analysis. After this step of peer-reviewing all cases underwent a language check.

**Analysing the cases from the #Multinclude database**

In the process of analyzing the cases, the first step for ECHO was to write a framework for analysis that would support in the process of contextualizing the different cases. This was particularly important given the fact that the cases are all so very different, situated within different contexts. In the next chapters all these different indicators will be presented. The aim of detecting the indicators was to see if there were any patterns that are compatible with existing analysis and frameworks of experience. With the data from the cases and the indicators that were generated, a number of featured cases are highlighted in chapter 4 to provide an analysis based on the model of the Theory of Change from seven successful initiatives. These seven highlighted cases are selected by the partners because they are exceptional in their own way. The model of Theory of Change provided a framework to visualize the impact of the respective projects, thereby making it possible to learn most from the designs and contexts of those initiatives. These seven exceptional cases are highlighted, described and analyzed in the next chapter.”

**Main findings**

72 inspiring and successful, grassroots initiative practices were gathered and formed the basis of an elaborate scientific analysis. The goal of the analysis was to highlight the good of good practices in the field of creating a sense of belonging at school, and by that also in community and society, and to identify dimensions of better inclusion. The focus on evidence-based ideas for inclusion means that the cases in #MultInclude are tested educational practices that can be implemented, adapted and upscaled in new contexts.

The analysis builds on multiple contextual dimensions related to inclusion in education in the EU. First it is put in the context of existing EU policies in the field of inclusive education, also in the broader global context of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Both global and European policies demand education systems to provide inclusive, quality education for all. Within this context another dimension is early school leaving prevention, meaning not only that students remain in school until a certain age, but also that they obtain skills and qualifications as well as a lifelong learning mindset for future success. In providing the dimensions for analysis two more considerations are to define our understanding of what we mean by evidence-based practices and what we consider success and effective practices in inclusion – with regards to individual student success, sustainability, adaptability and other factors.

In the report, the methodology chosen is described in detail for the reader to understand the analysis better. It describes how the consortium spent months discussing and developing the questionnaire to do a first description of inclusion practices collected
by the partners, mostly from Europe, but also from other parts of the world (12 of the cases collected and analysed with the support of ESHA members). These cases can already be used for inspiration by the reader following this link. ECHO, the Dutch Centre for Diversity Policy chose a total of 7 cases for more in-depth analysis to find commonalities, synergies and peculiarities that can then support developing better inclusion practices on local level.

The in-depth analysis identifies a problem or challenge the practice addresses, describes the key audience of the case, introduces the entry point to address the audience, describes the necessary steps to implement the practice, elaborates on the measurable effects of the case, the wider benefits of it and the long-term change it initiates. The challenges addressed in the in-depth analyses are the following:

- Drop-out risk of children with behavioural problems (No Bad Kid – Hungary)
- Racism and radicalisation trends – (Cafe Latte – Italy)
- Struggles of newly arrived migrant students to continue in education that is in a different cultural context and language – (UniClub – Austria)
- Non-native students not learning and experiencing their own language and culture in regular school context – (State Europe School Berlin – Germany)
- High drop-out rates among university students and an existing divide between students and faculty (The Big Read – Sweden)
- Challenges for higher education teachers in working with international and intercultural classes – (Realising the inclusive, international, intercultural classroom – the Netherlands)
- Need to enhance academic writing skills of students who have difficulties with writing in standard English - (Social Blogging – Jamaica)

The report then gives a cross-cutting analysis of these practices focusing on three types of changes to enhance inclusion in schools, namely, strategic administrative actions, curricular change and pedagogical change. It also emphasises that successful cases, while having clear, measurable outcomes along their original aims, usually also has an unintended impact element on better inclusion.

Probably the largest challenge in analysing the cases identified by the partnership was that they take place in a wide variety of physical and learning environments and are implemented by very different actors. For this reason, ECHO decided to use the framework of Prof. Frank Tuitt’s work and focus on conditions that have proven to be beneficial to enhance inclusive education regardless the differences in the place of learning.

All 70+ cases are first assessed according to learning environments, including aspects as social environment, conditions for learning, physical and pedagogical environments. The report also highlights some important beneficial considerations for learning and inclusion that are defined and linked to the different cases.
These considerations are:

- bridging gaps,
- learning and social skills,
- language and learning and
- learning through a holistic approach.

The analysis of so many and so different cases also led to a typology that the research team summarises in the report. A few characteristics of the case studies in the #MultInclude database:

- 60 of the 72 of the case studies are grassroots initiatives.
- 64 of the 72 case studies take place in Europe.
- 26 of the 72 case studies are based in superdiverse, majority-minority cities (Crul, 2013);
- 64 of the 72 case studies mentioned that they monitor the progress of their programme.
- 49 of the 72 case studies are based on existing theoretical frameworks.
- 47 of the 72 case studies are initiated because of policy measures or driven by lack of policy.
- 64 of the 72 cases receive some form of financial support. A third of the programmes receive funding from a government (national, provincial or local), a third from education institutions and a third from private foundations or sponsors.

The analysis highlights the great diversity of target groups, the growing commitment to inclusive education underlined by the fact that there has been a growing number of initiatives in recent years. Cases can also be divided into groups by their primary target being prevention, intervention and/or compensation.

The fact that nearly 1/3 of cases were initiated or solely carried out by non-formal education providers with the ultimate goal of better school inclusion highlights the importance for schools to implement an open school approach, to collaborate with their own internal stakeholders as well as external stakeholders around the school to achieve the goal of inclusive, quality education. We hope practitioners, especially school leaders will be inspired by the work done in MultInclude. You can read the full analysis report following this link after the middle of December.

**Putting the analysis into practice**

On the basis of the analysis, a scoring matrix was developed and piloted in over 60 schools across Europe supporting schools to evaluate their inclusion strategies and practices along the lines of various dimensions so that they can use the collection and analysis of practices for inspiration to improve their inclusiveness.

The questionnaire of 163 items was developed along the lines of the following 7 dimensions and 4 domains:
Dimensions:
1. Admission and Access
2. Social Interaction
3. Student and Participant Support
4. Management
5. Teaching
6. Extracurricular activities and Community Outreach
7. Assessment and Recognition

Domains:
1. Intellectual and Social Development
2. Educational Resources
3. Cultural Differences
4. Classroom Environment

By using this matrix, your school, or a group of teachers from the school can explore the areas the school is currently scoring low, decide how important the given area is for your school. It is a snapshot that can then be used as a starting point for developing or improving internal strategies and processes as well as to decide on action for improvement. For example, if a school identifies a need to update their management or teaching practices in the domain of catering for cultural differences, they can develop a plan for that.

**Conclusion**

(MultInclude also offers an online course that you can register for here: https://multinclusive.eu/activities/multiply/mooc-registration/ While the Scoring Matrix focuses on the school, this gives you an opportunity to develop your professional skills and competences.)

The matrix was developed by the team doing the search and analysis, validated by experts in workshops, and evaluated for fine-tuning by piloting schools. The last element of evaluation of the matrix for finalisation was concluded partly based on the feedback of these schools, and partly through an in-depth analysis of schools’ self-evaluation in the online matrix.

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Daugiafunkcė (*MultInclude*) pagalba mokykloms tobulinant įtraukties strategijas

**Eszter Salamon**¹, **Mary Tupan Wenno**², **Josefien van Marlen**³, **Simone Aumaj**⁴

¹Europos mokyklų vadovų ir tarptautinė tėvų asociacija, Otto van der Leckstraat St. 4, 5321HZ Hedel, Olandija, director@parentsinternational
²ECHO, Įvairovės politikos centras, Olandija
³ECHO, Įvairovės politikos centras, Olandija
⁴ECHO Įvairovės politikos centras, Olandija

**Santrauka**

Įtraukusis švietimas šiandien yra aktuali tema visoje Europoje. Įvairiai bandoma pristatyti ir parengti įtraukiojo švietimo strategijas skirtingoms amžiaus ir socialinėms grupėms, pavyzdžiui, neigaliems moksleiviams, naujai atvykusiem migrantams, turintiems specialiųjų poreikių, ir kitų individualių poreikių turintiems vaikams. „MultInclude“, „Erasmus+“ projektas, kurio partneris yra ESHA, daugiausia dėmesio skiria daugiafunkciam moksleivių įtraukties poreikiams, turint omenyje tiek siekiančius įgyti bendrąją lavinimą, tiek tolygiai įsitraukti ir užbaigti aukštojo mokslo studijas. Mūsų tikslas yra mokytis visą gyvenimą, tenkinant kiekvieno studento individualius įtraukties poreikius. Projektas turi du tyrimo aspektus, kurie yra pristatomi šiam straipsnyje: pirma, buvo surinkta daugiau kaip 70 įtraukimo atvejų tyrimų iš viso pasaulio ir išanalizuota siekiant rasti „geriausią“ gerosios praktikos pavyzdį, antra, remiantis tuo, buvo sukurtas savęs vertinimo priemonė, kurį jau išbandyta daugiau kaip 50 mokyklų įvairiose Europos šalyse, taip pat pristatoma išanalizuota šių bandomųjų atvejų patirtis.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** *MultInclude, įtraukusis ugdymas.*

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