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Teachers and diversity workshop

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The workshop on teachers and diversity involved around 30 interested participants who volunteered for this topic prior to the seminar. The participants, a mixed group of teachers, school psychologists, school directors, university professors, representatives of NGOs and ministries, came from all seven beneficiaries of the project.

The objective of the workshop was to identify what is working well in the field of inclusion and the work of teachers, what obstacles or challenges are being faced, and what are the action steps needed to move forwards.



Existing practice - good practices and challenges

The objective of the morning session was to analyse the good practices already in place and the challenges that teachers face. After a brief introduction to the topic and the methodology, the World Café¹ structure was used with three rounds of questions, organised around key issues relating to inclusion and diversity concerning the work of teachers:

- **The role of teachers in their general work** to create an inclusive environment for all learners (including clarity of instructions and outcomes, ensuring that there is no bias or 'favouritism' in the classroom, teaching students how to learn, monitoring and assessment, accountability)

¹ Information about the World Café can be found here: www.theworldcafe.com



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- **Individual students who need further support** (including communicating expectations to students, adapting instruction to individual needs of students, the extent to which teaching is based on the needs of individual learners)
- **Pre-Service and in-service training** and the effectiveness/appropriateness of the **curricula** (including discussion of the inclusiveness of the mainstream curricula, specific curricula on inclusion and diversity, extra- curricula activities, mainstream pre-service and in-service trainings, and specific trainings on inclusion and diversity)



Addressing each question, all participants worked in small groups, to identify examples of good practice and obstacles or challenges. There was a short plenary after each question was addressed, with a brief feedback from each group. The groups were rearranged after each question, so that each participant worked with a new group of people on each new question round. This created the opportunity for each participant to meet and discuss

the issues with as many different people as possible.

The following general themes were identified, summarised from across all three rounds:

Good practices:

- A **good legislative framework** for all beneficiaries
- A **growing awareness** of issues around diversity and inclusion
- Some **pilots of good practice** are being developed - examples include projects involving Roma, grants to support school projects, peer learning, environmental projects
- Some **In-service teachers training** and peer learning projects are underway
- Some **tailoring of curricula** to meet individual needs of students
- Good level of **support to teachers** in some cases – examples include: support in classroom from assistants, support from other children, team work involving teacher, parent, psychologist, school management

Challenges:

- **Training – Pre-service and In-service training** needs to be improved, and teachers' capacities needs to be increased
- The **curricula** need to better reflect the needs of special needs students
- The **mainstream curricula** is not inclusive at present
- There needs to be more **flexibility** in implementing the curricula,
- The should better **integration** between a child's primary and secondary education



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- More **support** is needed at the level of human resources, infrastructure, better guidelines and protocols
- **Social problems** were also identified relating to a child's home environment that affected a child's inclusion at school – economic issues, lack of proper support from parents

A list of all existing practices and current challenges identified are available as an annex to this document.

Future action steps

In the afternoon session, the workshop addressed **the issue of action steps needed** to tackle the challenges and improve the situation for teachers. The workshop was divided into groups based on the needs and interests identified in the morning session as follows:

- **Support** that teachers need (including support from the community, parents, policies, the ministries etc)
- Pre-service and in-service **training** (many of the group wanted to work on this topic, so two smaller groups were formed – one addressing **pre-service training** and the other **in-service training**)
- Changes in the **curricula** needed (Despite this topic being identified strongly from the morning session, none of the group elected to focus on this topic themselves. However, it was incorporated into the work of other groups, and some recommendations for action in this area are nonetheless put forward).

As a result of the discussions, the following actions to be taken were identified – summarised from across all three working groups:

By Schools

- Organise **peer learning** in schools (horizontal learning) and provide materials (protocols, handbooks, manuals for assessment) accessible via online platforms of communication
- Organise **training** on individual educational support plans, how to use recreational activities, physical activities, technology as resources for special educational needs of children
- **Mobilise parents**, volunteers to organise activities on inclusive education
- Strengthen the parents' councils

By Parents

- Strengthen the **parents' councils**



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- **Organise workshops for parents** to increase knowledge on special educational needs, to eliminate biases, to help acceptance children with special educational needs and children of minorities
- Offer support to parents through **parent-to-parent models**
- Organise humanitarian activities and donations

By Academic and other institutions

- **Intensify collaboration** between school, health institutions and social care services (cross-sector commission at every school)
- **Develop training programmes for university professors** on inclusion and give expert lectures to school staff and parents on new and innovative methods
- **Mainstream inclusiveness in cross-curriculum topics** (to help students to be prepared to implement inclusive practices)
- **University professors need to be partners** in preparation of curricula of pre-university education

By Local authorities

- Improve **school infrastructure** (lifts, toilets, teaching materials, assisting technology, computers)
- **Increase budget** for evaluation of the special educational needs
- Establish a **cross-sectoral commission**
- **Increase public awareness** (school and local community) including through media and PR
- **Ensure transportation** for all students

By Ministries of Education

- Allocate **special funds for inclusion** reflected in specific budget lines (in-service training, human resources), and ensure proper school infrastructure
- Adjust legal framework and establish **cross-sectoral inter-ministerial commission**
- **Set up list of criteria for inclusion** (including basic standards for inclusive education)
- Raise the **threshold for criteria of enrolment** in the university for teacher education
- Ensure **smaller classes** in the schools

Reflections

The teachers worked well together, co-operating to address the issues of mutual concern, overcoming linguistic differences and easily crossing traditional professional boundaries to come up with well thought-out and constructive solutions. There was particular interest in the issue of training – in-service and pre-service training – and therefore this would be an excellent place to start implementing changes as outlined.



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The group had the constructive approach that although they wanted more support from the Ministries, there was the recognition that this would take time. There was a high level of commitment to take forward actions that could be implemented immediately and which did not need a high level of financial resources input – for example the sharing of good practices that already exist, peer support and the development of an online platform for resources to be shared, and to work to increase the involvement of parents. **This high level of commitment can be seen as a resource to be utilised to extend the good work of this conference further.**

