Chapter 12

Evaluation of Supports for Inclusive Education:
A Study of People With Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders in Spain

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes inclusion processes and their evaluation in school contexts. It addresses the question of the assessment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as the assessment of factors related to inclusion. As an example, data from a study carried out with schoolchildren with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in Spain (n = 249) will be presented. The research was carried out with schoolchildren between 5 and 17 years of age. The methodology used was the evaluation through a support needs assessment scale and analysis of the scores obtained on the scale. The results have indicated very intense support needs in most of the people with ASD evaluated and more intense in scale values in support areas related to inclusion than other populations with intellectual disabilities but without autism. The results suggest the importance of having reliability measures that allow assessing the intensity of the support needs of schoolchildren, with or without intellectual disabilities, and that help to promote support systems based on evidence of effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation of Inclusion in School Contexts

Inclusion in education cannot be addressed on an international level without tools such as the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth et al., 2000). In the more than twenty years since its first edition, it has been a guide for all those who work in the education system. Its main objective has always been to support the entire

education community in assessing the processes of inclusion and to assist in promoting change and advancing more inclusive practices.

The terms "equity" and "inclusion" are basic principles for cultures that grow with and through the growth of their citizens. However, there is not always consensus on what these terms mean (Ainscow, 2020), which is why it is advisable to engage in public debate with the aim of finding common ground on their definitions. The concept of equity, beyond its legal dimension, seems to be underpinned by considerations of individual needs and the responses that a society provides to those needs to respond to "three major tasks" (Sarrionandia, 2017):

1. "the inclusion of all",
2. "the recognition and participation of all", and
3. having the resources for learning to take place at "the highest level" and with the "highest possible performance".

In the years since its first publication, there have been several revisions and extensions focusing on different educational stages and adaptations in different countries (Booth et al., 2015). In Spain, different versions and adaptations of the guide have been proposed: for early childhood education (Booth et al., 2006); as a tool for primary school (Vélez Calvo et al., 2018); studies designed to validate the guide for secondary school students (Fernández-Archilla et al., 2020); and an adaptation to university settings (Mesa & García, 2015). These works are some of the many examples we find in Spain of the commitment to developing a more inclusive education and society.

Relevant Aspects in the Evaluation of Inclusion in Schools

The *Index* is intended to be a guide on how to create an inclusive culture in schools (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). It establishes phases for development, which follow a cycle that is broadly similar to other processes to improve quality in services, but with slightly more flexible features (Booth et al., 2015). These phases form a continuous improvement cycle and are defined as follows:

- Phase 1: "Getting started", which initiates the process through the creation of a group comprising different members of the education system. This phase begins with a general discussion on inclusion and initial assessments of how the school is doing according to the dimensions and sections proposed by the *Index* and what aspects could be improved.
- Phase 2: "Finding out together" in which all those involved in the educational process lay the foundations for effecting change. Criteria are established to keep participants informed, and to build momentum and motivation for developing the *Index*. In this phase, identifying and prioritising areas for improvement is important for the next phase.
- Phase 3: "Producing a plan", which entails the identification of specific priorities, together with actions and the resources needed to implement them. Negotiation and consensus-building processes among members of the school community are fundamental in this phase, as they help to establish the basis for a shared project.
- Phase 4: "Taking action", the phase in which the changes and improvement actions proposed in Phase 3 are put into action. Any process of change in schools requires the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders. A key factor in this phase is the effort to introduce and maintain the

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