

The Changing Role of Specialist Provision to Support Inclusive Education

The rights-based approach to inclusive education, advocated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), promotes high-quality education for all. Working towards this rights-based goal, countries increasingly recognize the need to change the role of specialist provision and education systems are moving towards expecting mainstream education professionals to meet diverse needs (Council of the European Union, 2018; European Agency, 2015). A key question for many countries is, therefore, to clarify specialist provision's role in supporting all learners' rights to inclusive education.

The transformation of specialist provision into a resource for the mainstream sector involves four interrelated areas that policy-makers consider relevant:

- Governance mechanisms to support co-operation between specialist and mainstream provision at all levels
- Funding policies and strategies that support specialist provision to act as a resource for inclusive education
- Capacity-building mechanisms that enable specialist provision professionals to effectively support stakeholders in mainstream education
- Quality assurance mechanisms for specialist provision that promote transparent and accountable systems for inclusive education.

The transformation of specialist provision towards inclusive education results in: preventing learner drop-out; more learners being educated in mainstream settings and receiving the support they need; positive changes in school-level attitudes towards diversity in learning; schools' increased awareness and capacity to develop inclusive and flexible learning environments; teachers developing skills to support all learners, changing mindsets and developing shared guiding principles; supporting co-operation and creating networks; stakeholders' involvement, monitoring and evaluation.

References

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