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From integration to inclusion: focusing global trends and changes in the western European societies

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ABSTRACT

The first part of this paper addresses the question whether the new terminology that came into use after the Salamanca Statement meant only a linguistic shift or a new educational policy agenda. The answer given in the paper is that the shift to inclusion served a double purpose: Unesco's actions in the field in the early 1990s implied a policy vision for a global context and needed a new term to avoid giving the wrong signals to significant actors on a wider international arena. In the west, the two notions are frequently mixed, mostly considered as overlapping and without due recognition of the different cores of the two terms after Salamanca, that is *a shift of policy focus*, from special education to responding to the diversity within a common school for all students. This focused interpretation of inclusion, not to be mixed with integration, it is argued in the paper, is described and illustrated by reference to some recent innovations in the UK. As an instrument for moving practice towards more inclusive schools, the English *Index for Inclusion* has also obtained a certain international attention. However, tensions concerning reform priorities, that is whether focusing strategies and innovations on special education or on diversity in the common school, continuously seem to exist in the western societies. In the second part of the paper, the question whether inclusion has had any noticeable effect on the school systems in the western societies is therefore raised and examined in relation to two sets of statistical data reported for 14 European countries (obtained about 1990 and 1996). The analyses and discussions of the data have been inspired by the socio-historical perspective and related concepts (inclusiveness, segmentation, vertical vs horizontal divides) used by Fritz Ringer and colleagues in analysing the rise of the modern educational system in Europe.

KEYWORDS

Policy of integration, policy of inclusion, inclusive education, special education, special needs

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INCLUSION AS A GLOBAL DENOMINATOR IN THE 1990s

While integration was the main issue on the agenda when the international community and national governments discussed how to promote the right of disabled persons to an appropriate education until the end of the 1980s, inclusion has captured the field during the 1990s. The main question is, of course, whether the new terminology means only a linguistic shift or a new agenda.

A first step towards a clarification might be to note under what circumstances – and when – the shift first came to be internationally recognized. In that respect, the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, with the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, represents the event that definitely set the policy agenda for inclusive education on a global basis (Unesco, 1994). According to the Unesco documents, inclusive education

— challenges all exclusionary policies and practices in education;
— is based on a growing international consensus of the right of all children to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability;
— aims at providing good-quality education for learners and a community-based education for all.

The Salamanca Statement, adopted by representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations in June 1994, has since generally been regarded as a powerful instrument for innovations in the field.[1] After Salamanca, the linguistic shift is a fact: inclusion has obtained status as a *global* descriptor. This does not mean that there is a formally fixed and stable use of terminology in the literature. What counts is that the international community, by their signatures, has formally adopted a new policy and a new term, which has an effect on the international discourse in the field – in a very simple way, it tends to regulate the word usage on the international arena.[2] So far, we are talking about a linguistic shift, from one notion to another, that conceptually could be considered very closely. Another question is: why this shift?

A main argument for a linguistic shift to be introduced with the Salamanca Statement was the different roles of international organizations and, in particular, the wider international context to which the policy and action now became orientated. Before Salamanca, integration had served as a descriptor of a particular policy concern in the western countries in the 1970s and 1980s. The OECD projects on the integration issue were organized in this first period and continued into the 1990s. By the turn of the 1980s, Unesco formally adopted inclusion as a descriptor for the organization's main activities in the field. Unesco's actions in the field went beyond the western region and had a global orientation. A policy vision for a wider world context needed a new label to avoid giving the wrong signals to significant actors representing relevant interests and partners on a wider international arena. Particularly for the developing countries integration would have been a difficult descriptor for the new actions (see Jangira, 1995; Kisanji, 1998).[3] Integration was embedded in the western European history of segregation of disabled people. For a century this history had been going on, with few, if any, realizing that in the western societies a strong and total system of segregated institutions for disabled people had been established. Having recognized *the history of segregation*, integration was formulated as a programmatic principle for a new societal practice and for institutional reforms in the western societies in the 1960s.

In the western societies desegregation and integration have been difficult processes, with their own problems and controversies, but also with possibilities and opportunities that have very little relevance to the situation confronting developing countries after Salamanca. Their opportunity is to get started on the process to build up – sometimes almost from the bottom – an inclusive system. In this process, the developing countries definitely need resources and support from the non-developing countries. The danger now is that the resources and support come in packages from the west – also including well-packed 'knowledge and experiences' on how to make inclusion in a western way. This is a delicate situation for all international and national government-based agencies, as well as the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), sending advisers, educators and researchers from the west to the developing countries. The advisers, travelling with their baggage of projects, programmes and conceptualizations, with the purpose of sharing what they have learnt in their context with developing country experts, administrators or people on the ground, also have a delicate job to do.

FOCUSING THE WESTERN SOCIETIES: FROM INTEGRATION TOWARDS INCLUSION

Turning again to the OECD arena, different opinions about the meanings of the two notions have been expressed and debates on integration versus inclusion have been going on during the 1990s. The literature is full of examples of 'voices from the west', who may argue that the terms mean the same, while others are making distinctions. Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997) have argued that both terms are being used to express comparable processes and outcomes, emphasizing particularly that there are wider notions of integration that are coming 'close to the concept of inclusion' (p. 2). Zones of overlapping between the two notions, whether large or small, are one thing. An important question is, of course, also whether the notions have different cores or central foci. Looking back at what, by and large, had been the main concerns of integration in the western societies in the previous decades, I will argue that *the two notions have different foci, and that they should not be mixed*. To clarify my position, I shall first have to look back for the core foci of integration.

When integration came on the agenda in the 1960s and 1970s, it was, first of all, an attempt at system reforms. The reforms can be described as having three core foci. Integration was demanding:

1. *rights to schooling and education* for disabled children. Although 'all children' at that time were said to have a right to education, there were groups of children in most countries who did not have this right. Due to their disability, they were either provided for in other institutions (social, medical, etc.) or not in any institution at all (by category, excluded as 'not educable');
2. *rights to education in local schools* for disabled children were originally formulated as an attack on the centralized institutions normally established as special schools for designated categories of disabled pupils (e.g. the separate special school system);
3. *total reorganization of the special education system*, focusing all aspects of it, from the identification of its clients to the financial issues followed by integration, the internal local school organizational structure, and the handling of teaching and learning, including special education, in integrated classes.

In the 1970s, these demands called for fairly large-scale systemic reform initiatives, including policies themselves, new school legislation, organizational reshaping of the

school/special school system as a whole. The strength of the reform initiatives varied between states, but special education became a real concern in all countries. One thing was the increasing figures on pupils receiving special education provisions in the western countries as a consequence of integration, but also special education as a professional field experienced a real breakthrough and expansion in this period.[4]

As a further comment to the core foci of integration being linked to system reforms, it meant, of course, also that integration did not have much focus on teaching and learning or on classroom processes. Integration policies took mostly for granted that reforms at the system level would have effect on teaching and learning as classroom practice.[5] So far, this accords with what I have written earlier about *the two strategies of integration*, one focusing special education – that is, integration as a reform in special education. The other strategy is related to the reformulation of regular education – to make the general education system more comprehensive and diverse (Vislie, 1995, p. 47).

The two theories should be regarded as theoretical models, thus few countries within the OECD region may serve as clear-cut examples of any of the positions. The only exception to this mixed response to the integration trend in the early years might have been Italy (Vislie, 1981). The OECD report on integration in Italy attracted considerable attention and was debated at many conferences in Europe, Australia, Japan and the USA. The response was mostly critical to the Italian philosophy and practice, for example, being characterized by many as 'wild integration'. The most critical voices against integration as practised in Italy came from professionals with close links to special education, *as well as* from persons representing the disabled persons' own organizations. The field was divided, because the most positive responses also came from the same groups. Twenty years later, the field is still divided.

In a previous section, it was emphasized that integration had no history in the western societies when the principle was first formulated back in the 1960s. By the year 2000, a short history of integration may be discerned, which explains why inclusion, when it came on the agenda in our societies in the 1990s, led to a debate on terminology. A number of western authors have addressed this issue during the past decade. Having looked back at the meaning of integration in the 1960s and 1970s, what is the meaning of inclusion in the west two to three decades later?

INCLUSION IN THE WEST: A BROADER VISION WITH A NEW FOCUS

Compared to integration, it is said about inclusion also in the west, that it is *a broader vision* than integration because it covers more issues. I agree with Pijl *et al.* (1997): some of these issues are definitely not new, but were included in the notion of integration as well.[6] A version of inclusion presented by Farrell (2000) is more focused. Speaking from the UK, Farrell departs from ten years ago, 'when pupils in special schools were segregated, and those in mainstream schools were integrated' (p. 153), but little or nothing was said about *the quality of the integrated provision*. According to Farrell, the alternative term inclusion was introduced as a more accurate way of describing the quality of education offered to pupils with special needs in integrated settings. Farrell refers to Ainscow having taken the notion of inclusion a stage further to describe the way mainstream schools should cater for all their pupils, and also for having used phrases such as 'inclusive schools for all' without specific reference to pupils with SEN[7] (*ibid.*, pp. 153–4).

Thus, Farrell actually links recent actions in the UK to some innovative projects developed under the auspices of Unesco in the early 1990s. The Unesco teacher education project, 'Special needs in the classroom', developed by a team of international

experts under the direction of Ainscow, provided important ideas and materials for the new directions on special needs education that emanated from the Salamanca Conference.[8] On this background, the UK seems an interesting case for further tracing out the meaning of inclusion in the west – after Salamanca.

In their presentation of inclusion, Sebba and Ainscow (1996) refer to integration, but see the emergence of inclusive schooling as a new principle, which challenges much of existing practice in the special needs field, while, at the same time, offering critique of general education. The authors argue that any definition of inclusion needs to make a clear distinction between inclusion and integration (*ibid.*, p. 8). From their discussion of such distinctions it is possible to identify what they see are not, or are, *the key features of inclusion* (*ibid.*, pp. 7–9).

Inclusion *is not*:

— focusing on an individual or small group of pupils for whom the curriculum is adapted, different work is devised or support assistants are provided;
— about how to assimilate individual pupils with identified special educational needs into existing forms of schooling.

Inclusion *is*:

— a process (rather than a state), by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals;
— regards inclusion and exclusion as connected processes; schools developing more inclusive practices may need to consider both;
— emphasizes the reconstructing of curricular provision in order to reach out to all pupils as individuals;
— emphasizes overall school effectiveness;[9]
— is of relevance to all phases and types of schools, possibly including special schools, since within any educational provision teachers face groups of students with diverse needs and are required to respond to this diversity.

Sebba and Ainscow regarded the above as key points in a framework for work on school improvement with schools in general, in order to consider how they might move forward in developing more inclusive practice (*ibid.*, p. 10). On the basis of such conceptualizations as outlined above, an English group of researchers have developed a programme for inclusive education during the 1990s (e.g. the *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*: Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Vaughan, 2002).[10] The Department for Education and Employment in the UK had provided financial support for the piloting of the project, as well as for the distribution of the Index to 26,000 primary, secondary and special schools and all local education authorities in England. It has later been translated into a number of other languages on the initiatives of national/local project groups who have been interested in using it in their local schools. An example is Norway, where the Index is currently tried out in all schools in one municipality. The project is financed by the Norwegian Research Council as part of a five-year-long programme for a national evaluation of school reform (1997). The Index is used in the evaluation as a means of contributing to the improvement of the policy and programme.[11]

The international attention obtained by the *Index for Inclusion* may indicate that the new terminology (from 'integration' to 'inclusion') has opened up for new and fruitful approaches to the field. A look at the construction and the use of the Index may therefore be worthwhile. First of all, it is important to recognize that the Index attempts to use the best available knowledge in the fields of school development and inclusive schooling in order to provide an effective means of reviewing and developing practice within a school.[12]

In summing up on a series of research activities of the group related to the development of inclusive practices in schools, Ainscow (2000) stated that the essence of all this work was to address the question: how to create educational contexts that 'reach out to all learners'? He pointed towards the following six 'ingredients' as helpful in formulating strategies for *moving practice forward*:

1. starting with existing practices and knowledge;
2. seeing differences as opportunities for learning;
3. scrutinizing barriers to participation;
4. making use of available resources to support learning;
5. developing a language of practice;
6. creating conditions that encourage risk-taking.[13]

The above strategies were said to represent a relevant first framework for 'an inclusive pedagogy' and a means of 'raising standards' within a school. Ainscow recognized the profound changes that are implied by such a programme and the difficulties involved in moving practice forward in the direction prescribed, but 'improvement optimism' is also reflected in his paper. The current political situation in the UK regarding inclusive education, with 'New Labour' in charge of the government since spring 1997 and 'inclusion' an integral part of the government's policy, might have given room for more optimism than in previous decades.

There are, however, many critical voices going against the government policy in the UK. Roger Slee, for example, has noted that: 'the euphoria in the United Kingdom following the election of the Blair New Labour in government is, in some education circles, giving way to grave concern over the instrumentalism of the education policy agenda' (Slee, 1997, p. 308). The new government's continuance of the previous government's 'raising-the-standards' programme, the school effectiveness rhetoric and the performance league tables were among the points particularly mentioned by Slee in his editorial note in *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (*ibid.*). Shaw, on her part, describes the change and development in the UK to more inclusive schools as having potential for both progress and crisis: 'Support for inclusion is perhaps the strongest ever but tensions arise from different understandings of the inclusion process and from different value systems' (Shaw, 2001, p. 2).

The focused interpretation of inclusion, as it has been described in this section and identified with some recent innovations in the UK, has obviously gained a certain ground in the country. However, not only has the government been criticized for its inclusive school policy, but the 'inclusionists' have also got their share. Among the critics are the 'integrationists', who will not support more 'inclusive reforms' unless demands for more special needs education are simultaneously guaranteed, while one of the problems that the 'inclusionists' seem to have with the present government's policy is the permanent role ascribed to a smaller number of special schools mentioned in the Green Paper.[14] On this occasion, the 'inclusionists' had at least hoped that the government would have recommended 'the phasing out of all special schools over a reasonable period of time'.[15] The argument is, of course, that as long as the special schools exist, there will also exist criteria in the system to pull students out, thereby undermining the principle of inclusion in any system.

Some of the tensions existing in the field in the UK for the moment also seem to exist in the other European countries and to be related to the 'old' issue about reform priorities: special education versus diversity in a common school. On this background, we may wonder whether inclusion has had any noticeable effect on the school systems in the region? What is actually the status of inclusion in this part of the world *after Salamanca*? As a first response to these questions, we shall turn to the statistical figures in the next section.

FROM INTEGRATION TO INCLUSION – WHAT DO THE STATISTICS TELL?

The following analyses will be based on statistical data. Data alone have little meaning unless placed within some theoretical frame of orientations and related conceptualizations. Ringer is known as one of the pioneers in analysing the rise of the modern educational system in Europe. In the following analyses and discussions, I shall rely on the social-historical perspective and some of the concepts introduced by Ringer and his colleagues (Müller, Ringer and Simon, 1987; Ringer, 1987, 1992).

Ringer and his colleagues are not considering educational provisions in relation to disability groups and the institutionalization of special education – that era is not covered by their works. However, in their studies on the development of educational systems in Europe, they have used concepts like *inclusiveness*, *progressiveness* and *segmentation* to describe different features of such systems. They have also defined statistical measures for each of the properties that have been applied as instruments for making comparative analyses between different European state systems. The following is a brief presentation of these properties, as defined by Ringer (1992, p. 34):

— an *inclusive* educational system is one that schools a comparatively large fraction of the population; measures of inclusiveness are percentages of the relevant age group;
— a *progressive* system is one that recruits a relatively high proportion of its students from the lower-/lower-middle class;
— a *segmented* system is one in which different programmes of study at the same age level also differ in the social origins of their students.

With some adjustment, the properties and measures presented above are considered relevant for studying possible changes in the relations between special education and regular education in the European region during the 1990s. A few comments regarding the adjustments concerning school populations and data are given below.

The *inclusiveness of an education system* at the compulsory level can be described or 'measured' on the basis of enrolment data for this level as percentages of the relevant age group. Furthermore, the part of the system referred to is the regular schools, mostly financed by public money. A quick glance at the statistical material for the OECD member states generally indicates a relatively high degree of inclusiveness in the regular education systems at this level, a reflection of compulsory education becoming a comprehensive 'school for all' system during the twentieth century – *although with some exceptions and still with some segmentation*.

According to our point of view, *segmentation*[16] is the most interesting feature to study, in our terminology usually referred to as 'segregated (special education) provisions'. Ringer focused students' social class background in his analyses of segmentation; our focus will be on the 'special educational needs students'. Typically, Ringer describes segmentation as two forms, one that is *vertical* (monolithic), catering for the more 'elevated' clientele, and one usually 'milder form', representing a *horizontal*, less pronounced divide of 'status' attributes. Apart from how strongly the several segments of an educational system or sector differ in social origins of their students, Ringer also refers to other empirical aspects of segmentation; for example, that particular segments may be more or less *inclusive* (depending upon how many students they encompass), more or less *systematic* (more or less rigorously defined or codified), being more or less coupled with *curricular differences*, etc. (*ibid.*, p. 57).

Taking the various aspects of segmentation introduced by Ringer into consideration, the vertical segment will in this study be identified as the SEN students in special schools and classes, while the horizontal segment will be the SEN

students in the mainstream classes. Integration policies have generally given much attention to organizational aspects related to the placement of SEN students in the school system. From the point of view of inclusion as the overall principle of this study, the identification or recording process will be regarded as a problematic first step in a segmentation process, that is *an indication of a school system responding to diversity by codification and labelling*.

The next step in the process is either placement of the SEN student in the mainstream or in a segregated provision, respectively referred to in the following as an instance of *curriculum segmentation*, or as *organizational segmentation* (for short, the latter implying both curriculum and organizational segmentation). The point is that by looking at the whole process as segmentation, the interplay between the various dimensions of the segmentation process in a particular system will become more visible.

In the following, a series of statistical data will be presented. The data covers the obligatory school period (normally nine to ten years of schooling) and the relevant annual cohorts in each country. Data have been collected by the OECD (1995) and by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Meijer, 1998) at two different periods in the 1990s.[17] The discussion on policy changes will be based on data obtained from 14 different European states, that is the majority of the relevant western states in the region.[18] The focus will be on trends or moves over the period covered by the data, and less on the accumulation of statistical data as such. All analyses will be based on percentages (the proportion of SEN students in relation to the total number of students in the same age group).

Dividing Students by Labelling: Recorded SEN Students 1990 vs 1996

Data available concerning percentages of students who are identified by the system as SEN students in 1990 (column (a)) or in 1996 (column (b)) are presented in Table 1. It can be noted from the table that formal assessment and the recording of SEN students are still practised in all the countries, but there are wide differences between the countries in the relative number of students being recorded. The *highest percentages* of recorded SEN students at both registration points are noted for Finland (17.1% and 15%) and Denmark (13%), followed by Norway (6% and 6.5%), while the *lowest percentages* are noted for Greece, Italy and Sweden (all below 2% at both registration points).

Regarding the practice of recording SEN students, small changes (less than ±1%) or stability (0) are observed for the majority of the countries over the period, but with *more countries being noted for an upward than a declining trend* (Austria, Belgium, England, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (six) vs Finland, France, Germany and Spain (four)). The *highest reduction* in percentage of recorded students over the period can be noted for Germany (–2.7%) and Finland (–1.9%), while the *highest increase* is noted for The Netherlands (+1.3%) and Austria (+1.1%).

In most of the countries represented in Table 1, the assessment of SEN students is based on legally defined categories of special educational needs. The definitions and number of categories in operation vary across the countries (from two categories in Denmark up to 12 in Germany). Norway is an example of a non-categorical system, where students with special educational needs are neither categorized in the law nor in the curriculum. Actually, few countries, if any, have gone further in eliminating 'unnecessary' distinctions between children with special educational needs and others. In spite of its declared integration policy and non-categorical system, the percentage of recorded SEN students is surprisingly high in Norway.[19]

Table 1: Percentages of recorded SEN students of total student populations in compulsory education (1990 and 1996) in 14 European countries

Countries	Percentage of recorded SEN students 1990 (a)	Percentage of recorded SEN students 1996 (b)	Differences, 1990–96
Austria	2.6	3.7	(+) 1.1
Belgium (FL/FR)	3.1	3.5/3.9	(+) 0.4/0.8
Denmark	13.0	12–13	(0) (?)
England and Wales	1.9	2.8	(+) 0.9
Finland	17.1	15.0 (?)	(–) 1.9
France	3.5	2.6	(–) 0.9
Germany (FRG)	7.0	4.3	(–) 2.7
Greece	0.9 (?)	0.8	(0) 0
Italy	1.3	1.3	(0) 0
The Netherlands	3.6	4.9	(+) 1.3
Norway	6.0	6.5	(+) 0.5
Portugal	n.a.	2.7	n.a.
Spain	2.0	1.7	(–) 0.3
Sweden	1.6	1.7	(+) 0.1

Note: Belgium: FL = Flemish Community; FR = French Community; n.a. = data not available; (?) = data/estimate uncertain.

It is important to recognize that the percentages of identified SEN students in a country may as much reflect how financial resources for special education are released in a school system as actual needs, particular features of assessment procedures or student characteristics:

> … it is well established that people and organisations sometimes use funds in according with their own goals. There are different kinds of strategic behaviour that may be the result of the funding system. Different actors may show different kinds of *strategic behaviour*. Situations can be envisaged where schools may use the funding system to the advantage of the organisation, which may not be in line with the formal policy. Similarly, parents may also demonstrate strategic behaviour that is not in line with the policy. (Meijer, 1999, p. 20; emphasis in original)

Having analysed several funding models in operation for special needs education in different European countries, Meijer's conclusion is that funds can as well be allocated simply on the basis of total enrolment in primary education or some other population indicator (*ibid.*, p. 169).

Funding models are, however, not neutral, but serve the intentions of the larger system within which they operate. Basic to the funding problems are the problems with the ambiguities of the 'special needs' construct as such. Originally linked to educational provisions for a few disability categories (still practised in several European societies, see below), 'special needs' have become conceptually related to a complexity of opposing 'rights', ranging from rights to protection, separation and privileges (positive discrimination) on the one hand, to rights to participation, inclusion and equality on the other hand, and – due to this complexity of intentions – not regulated by any clear criteria regarding persons entitled to the respective 'rights'.

Regardless of the causes behind the national figures reported in this section, the conclusion is that the recording of SEN students is practised in all the national systems examined in this study, that is in a sector of the educational system otherwise characterized by a high degree of inclusiveness (the obligatory school sector). In the next sections, we shall look at the 'educational consequences' of the recording of SEN students in different national systems, thereby tracing what purposes the labelling practice may actually serve in the systems. Is the primary purpose of the assessment to make it possible for some students to cross the boundaries between neighbouring 'tracks' (Ringer, 1987, p. 57), or is it mostly a necessary procedure by which a regular school may be formally 'permitted' (and eventually financed) to make *curricular divergences* between special and regular education programmes?

Organizational Segmentation: Students in Segregated Provisions 1990 vs 1996

The next presentation concerns the groups *not included* in mainstream education, that is the students in separate special education provisions – a segment of compulsory education still existing in the western school system. The closing of the separate special education schools was the main object brought into focus by the Integration movement. Many of these frequently centralized (state-owned) institutions were closed down during the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, special classes or other types of separate school units for special education have been locally established.

Table 2 is constructed on two sets of data for a comparison regarding the proportion of students of compulsory school age in segregated provisions, that is either in special schools or classes, respectively in 1990 and 1996. Briefly, the data reported in Table 2 confirm that some segregated school provisions still existed in 1996 in all 14 countries, and that the range of variations between countries has increased over the period (from variations between 0.4–3.9 per cent in 1990 to

Table 2: Students in segregated school provisions as percentages of total student populations in compulsory education in 14 European countries

Countries	Percentage of students in segregated provisions, 1990	Percentage of students in segregated provisions, 1996	Differences, 1990–96
Austria	2.6	2.8	+ 0.2
Belgium (FL/FR)	3.1	3.4/3.2	+ 0.3/0.1
Denmark	1.6	1.7	+ 0.1
England and Wales	1.3	1.2–1.3	0
Finland	2.8	2.3	– 0.5
France	3.3	2.4	– 0.7
Germany (FRG)	3.7	4.3	+ 0.6
Greece	0.4	0.2–0.8	(?)
Italy	n.a.	0.5	(?)
The Netherlands	3.6	4.9	+ 1.3
Norway	0.7	0.5	–
Portugal	n.a.	0.7 (max.)	(?)
Spain	1.0	0.3	– 0.7
Sweden	1.0	0.8	– 0.2

Note: Segregated provisions = special schools/classes ('educated outside the mainstream'); for Greece, Italy and Portugal data were not available or inaccurate for estimating changes over the period; n.a. and (?) = data estimate uncertain.

0.3–4.9 per cent in 1996. The *highest percentages* of students in segregated provisions at both registration points (more than 3.5 per cent) are noted for The Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, while the *lowest percentages* are noted for Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (less than 1.1 per cent).

An illustrative version of the overall trends in the region over the period is presented in Table 3. The observed percentages of students in segregated provisions are here divided into five groups (< 1 per cent; 1–1.9 per cent, etc., up to >4 per cent) and the countries then placed in their respective groups according to data registrations made in 1990 and in 1996. The increasing number of countries in the <1 per cent group is particularly worth noticing as an interesting change. Only three countries were represented in this group around the turn of the 1980s (Greece, Italy and Norway). About five years later, the group consisted of six countries (Spain and Sweden having moved down, and Portugal being a newcomer in the international statistics).

The *upward moves* registered for Germany and The Netherlands are remarkable. However, knowing that these countries are not practising integration at all, the figures mainly confirm that their policies are stable. For Germany there is no sign yet that its policy will change, neither is there any such clear signs from Belgium. As far as The Netherlands is concerned, a new funding formula for special education was introduced in 1998, and thus we may expect to see new data from this country in the future (Meijer, 1998; Pijl and van den Bos, 2001). It is to be noted that the number of countries in the 3.0–3.9 per cent group, which was the highest one in 1991, has not increased over the period. It consisted of four countries in 1991. With France having moved down one step during the early 1990s, there were only three countries left in this group in the later part of the decade.

For Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, The Netherlands and Sweden there is a high, almost perfect, relationship between the percentages of recorded SEN students (Table 1) and the percentages of students in segregated school provisions (Table 2). The purpose of the recording is placement in segregated provision. The

Table 3: Segregated provisions (1990–96): an illustration of trends in the period for each of the 14 countries (based on data from Table 2)

< 1% No countries	1%–2% No countries	2%–3% No countries	3%–4% No countries	> 4% No countries
1990: *3 countries* Greece Italy Norway	*1990:* *4 countries* Denmark England and Wales Spain Sweden	*1990:* *2 countries* Austria Finland	*1990:* *4 countries* Belgium (FL/FR) France Germany The Netherlands	*1990:* *No country*
1996: *6 countries* Greece Italy Norway Spain Sweden (Portugal)	*1996:* *2 countries* Denmark England ← Spain) ← Sweden)	*1996:* *3 countries* Austria Finland France	*1996:* *1 country* Belgium ← France) (Germany → (The Netherlands →	*1996:* *2 countries* Germany The Netherlands

opposite is the case for Denmark, Finland and Norway; note the low proportion of recorded students enrolled in segregated provisions. For the remaining countries the relationship is less clear.

Curriculum Segmentation: SEN Students in Mainstream Classes

The last set of data to be presented concerns SEN students in mainstream classes (Table 4), with only 11 countries included (see note). The range of variations in the two first columns of Table 4 reflects observations made earlier regarding high versus low percentages of students in segregated provisions (Table 2). In 1990, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria and Belgium did not organize any education in the mainstream for recorded SEN students, and in France it seldom occurred (0.2 per cent). At the next registration point, the situation is the same in these countries, with the exception of Austria, where an opening (at least) towards education in the mainstream can be observed. For the other countries the changes are small (see the differences between the 1990 and the 1996 percentages noted in the last column in Table 4). A clear exception is Finland, where the difference over the period is of a certain size and in the negative direction.

Looking at the last column in the table on 'differences' between percentages of SEN students in mainstream education in 1990 and 1996, the *overall trend is stability or minimal changes over the period*. The only exception to the overall trend is Finland. With the exception of Finland, all changes noted are also in the positive direction, with the strongest trend towards the mainstream noted for Norway, Spain and Sweden.[20]

Summing Up: What the Statistics Tell

The observations made above regarding developments in the field during the 1990s for a number of European countries can be briefly summarized as follows:

Table 4: Percentages of SEN students in mainstream classes (1990–96): data on 11 European countries

Countries	Percentage of SEN students in mainstream classes, 1990	Percentage of SEN students in mainstream classes, 1996	Differences, 1990–96
Austria	0	1.1	+ 1.1
Belgium (FL/FR)	0	0.1/0	+ 0.1/0
Denmark	11.4	12–13	+ 0.1–1.1
England and Wales	0.6	0.6–0.7	+ 0–0.1
Finland	14.2	12–13	– 1.2/2.2
France	0.2	0.2	0
Germany (FRG)	0 (?)	0	0
The Netherlands	0	0	0
Norway	5.3	6.0	+ 0.7
Spain	1.0	1.4	+ 0.4
Sweden	0.6	0.9	+ 0.3

Notes: The data available on SEN students in mainstream class education are less exact than the data on segregated provisions. For some of the countries the data are presented as 'best guesses'. Greece, Italy and Portugal are omitted due to incomplete data.

1. the formal practice of recording SEN students continues in all the countries examined;
2. regarding the size of the proportions of SEN students being recorded, there are wide differences between the countries. The general trend over the period is stability or only small changes, but with more countries being noted for an upward than a declining trend (6:4);
3. regarding segregated provisions (SEN students in special schools/classes), the general impression is stability or only small changes, combined with an increasing number of countries having less than one per cent of the student population in such provisions. The number of countries being noted for an upward vs a downward trend was equal (5:5);
4. in all countries (except Finland), a small but stable increase in the proportions of SEN students being provided for in mainstream schools was observed;
5. the main 'purpose' of the formal recording of SEN students varies among the European countries: in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, The Netherlands and Sweden the main 'purpose' is placement of students in segregated provisions (*crossing boundaries between 'tracks'*); in Denmark, Finland, and Norway it is 'mainstreaming' ('permitting' schools to make *curricular divergences* between special and regular programmes).

DISCUSSION

First, it should again be emphasized that the quality of the statistical figures analysed above does not allow any strong conclusions regarding differences between countries in relation to the various special needs education issues described. The study has therefore concentrated on trends and developments in such provisions. Such results are difficult to interpret, and to give an accurate picture of the situation is hardly possible. Secondly, it should be recognized that the main issue at stake for the analyses undertaken was not special education, but rather to look for the status of inclusion after Salamanca (see above). As policies and practice, special education and inclusion represent a rather complex system of tensional relationships, and it would be wrong to consider the two systems as converted versions.

However, on the background of the summary presented above and with the reservations presented regarding the quality of the national macro data on which the estimates have been made, it may be concluded that *inclusion has not gained much ground in the western European region over the period examined above (early to mid-late 1990s)*. The special education field has been described as in great trouble, mainly due to the full inclusionists' call for an end to all special education settings, it has been argued (see e.g. Fuchs and Fuchs, 1995). According to our data, it seems that special education has lost little ground in the 1990s. Other data from the same period support this conclusion – in fact, even strengthen the picture of special education as a growing field in European education (OECD, 2000).

Educational segregation in the traditional form, established as separate systems and school provisions, has been under fire since integration policies came on the agenda in Europe in the 1970s. The traditional special system has in most countries been phased out and replaced by local arrangements of a more flexible type, but still with many of the same characteristics. The data on 'students in segregated provisions', presented above (Tables 2 and 3), probably represent a mixture of data obtained from traditional segregated provisions and new (local) special education arrangements. 'A growing group of policy-makers, educators and parents believes that segregation in education has gone too far', write Pijl and van den Bos (2001, p. 112) from The Netherlands,

adding also that a 'gradually increasing number of parents want their children with special needs to attend a regular school'. If this can be taken as a general trend among the European countries that until now systematically have practised special education as 'an organizational divide', we should soon be able to draw a different picture of special education in the region, namely a reduced proportion of students in segregated provisions (the provision as such will hardly disappear) and an increased proportion of students in the mainstream.

The point is that *the status of inclusion* will not be much changed, probably not even touched, by such manoeuvres – actually well illustrated in the studies on the role of support teachers in four countries (England, The Netherlands, Spain and Australia) published in the Special Issue of the *European Journal of Special Needs Education* (vol. 16, no. 2, 2001). 'Redesigning regular education support' has been on the agenda in many countries since the 1970s, different designs have been put into practice and some have functioned well as instruments to mainstreaming. However, these efforts have not fostered inclusive education, but rather the expansion of special education thoughts and practices into regular education, most likely with the effect to impede otherwise requested reforms in regular education settings (see Emanuelsson, 2001, for an excellent exposition of the problematic relations implied in such situations). Regarding the ongoing conflict between the two reform perspectives, the most critical point, according to Emanuelsson, is the traditional 'categorical perspective' of special education:

> Once children are identified as 'different' … they become problematic to mainstream schools and teachers. From within the categorical perspective the process of labelling children as 'having difficulties', has the effect of investing the source of any difficulty or problem within the child. Once this process is complete, then it becomes easier to transfer the responsibility to 'specialists' trained to deal with the 'problems' exhibited by the child. (*ibid.*, p. 135)

The statistical analyses presented above are linked to this critique by describing the special education need identification process as a first step in a segmentation process. Pupils labelled are in a special position within the mainstream class, which 'in itself is not inclusive education in the pure sense of the word' (Meijer, 1999, p. 169). As institutionalized practice, the identification of SEN students is bureaucratic and 'exclusive' – in its consequences seen as dysfunctional to the realization of 'inclusive education':

> The 'medical' model of assessment, within which educational difficulties are explained solely in terms of child deficits, prevents progress in the field, not least in that it distracts attention from questions about why schools fail to teach so many children successfully. Such arguments lead to proposals for a reconceptualisation of the special needs task. (Ainscow, Farrell and Tweddle, 2000, p. 212)

Integration policies in the 1970s and 1980s were particularly interested in what organizational arrangements were offered to SEN students, *favouring the mainstream* and *not minding so much the recording* – in both cases, special education was the issue. From the point of view of inclusive education, it is probably not so much the special schools that are the challenge any longer. The real challenge is *the reproduction of special education paradigms and rituals in regular education* as represented by the

trend towards mainstreaming of SEN students. I shall here refer to the summing up on the statistics for the European countries, above, indicating (1) an upward trend for the majority of countries regarding the proportion of students being recorded, and (2) in all countries (except one) a small but stable increase over the period in the proportion of SEN students being provided for in mainstream schools.

The *very high proportions of students being recorded in Finland, Denmark and Norway* also deserve a comment here, particularly because the practice of recording students in these countries (see Table 1) – all Nordic – is combined with a policy of 'mainstreaming' of the large majority of the SEN student groups (see Table 4). Whatever the reason behind this practice, the funding system was referred to as one factor, above; another factor mentioned was the basic difficulties with the 'special needs' construct as such, having become 'conceptually related to a complexity of opposing "rights", ranging from rights to protection, separation and privileges (positive discrimination) on the one side, to rights to participation, inclusion and equality on the other' (p. 12). Under the existing conditions, the possibilities for furthering inclusive practice in the Nordic schools are not favourable. In principle, there are only two ways out of the existing dilemma: either making attempts at a clarification of the construct and present practice (see e.g. OECD, 2000) or abolishing all formal statement procedures (transfer to inclusion).

Further moves towards 'inclusion' definitely require a rethinking of the role of special education in mainstream schools. Dyson and Gains (1993) have emphasized that, in this process, we need *a new language* that would still allow us to talk about students failing to learn, about teachers failing to teach and about why some students in some situations seem particularly difficult to teach effectively. But doing so without 'drawing distinctions between categories of students, or inviting us to allocate different students to different programmes, teachers and schools' (*ibid.*, p. 160). If a new language is what inclusion needs mostly, the challenge is not only rethinking the role of special education, but for inclusion to be able to set its own agenda. So far, it seems that special education issues have continuously dominated the debates in the field, allowing little space for new issues to be taken up. Thus knowledge development in the field has tended to stagnate.

'Good schools', as well as 'good school systems', are built on standards – standards for learning, standards for teaching, standards for school organizations and for school systems (see Darling-Hammond, 1997, pp. 210–60). These principles are highly valid also for inclusion. The special education/inclusive education debate on standards is, however, captured by conceptions of standards embedded within the horizon of the Thatcher-inspired English or Hirsch-inspired American systems of common standards, assessment and accountability for student performance. Instead of presenting alternatives, the idea of standards is rejected. Cohen has reminded how 'standards' is frequently misconceived, by stating that the chief use of the term is to focus on student work, and that 'it is student work that we want to improve, not standards or scholars' ideas about standards' (Cohen, 1995, p. 775). The negative effects of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning, as well as of external accountability testing, have also been widely documented. The point is that alternative approaches to standards and related reforms exist, using standards and assessments not for 'standardization', but as means of giving feedback to educators and as tools for organizing student and teacher learning, 'rather than as a sledgehammer to beat schools into change' (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 241). These reforms are built on new frameworks, representing important changes in curriculum, learning and assessment theories, and together forming a new social-constructivist paradigm for education (Shepard, 2000).

As mentioned above, the challenge for inclusion is to get free from the continuous focus on special education and become able to set its own agenda. Integration challenged the special education segregated practice by bringing new insights into the field, first, by opening up for sociological critique, and later through organizational theories. If inclusive education is to advance, it will also have to lean on new insights. The challenge is to join efforts with educationists working for the implementation of new educational paradigms in school policies and classroom practice.

NOTES

1. Dyson's report from the UK may serve as an example: 'Even the UK Government, not noted for looking beyond its national boundaries for education policies, nor, indeed, for subscribing readily to international proclamations, has recently declared its support for Salamanca, and announced a policy of inclusion … As a piece of polemic, it is enormously powerful' (Dyson, 1999, pp. 37–8).
2. See Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999) for an interesting report on extensive field research concerning the impact of international norms into domestic practices. The theoretical framework for the studies is described according to a *norms socialization process*, 'by which principled ideas held by individuals become norms in the sense of collective understandings about appropriate behavior which then lead to changes in identities, interests, and behavior' (p. 11).
3. Speaking from Africa, Kisanji argues that the move towards inclusive education in relation to people with disabilities is a western realization of the problems brought about by its own history of segregated practice and special schools, 'a system which was transported wholesale to countries of the South'. He also sees 'conditions for inclusive education in the non-western countries of the South – especially where a massive proliferation of special schools has not taken place' (1998, pp. 55–6).
4. Norway may here serve as an example. Special education as system and provision was very poorly developed in the country by the time the Integration movement started. The building up of a special teacher education system came in the early 1960s and expanded in the 1970s. The field was further professionalized in 1987, with the Special Teacher Education College obtaining status as a University College and permitted the right to offer a doctorate programme in special education and award a doctoral degree. In 1992 the institution became part of the University of Oslo, since 1996 organized as a Department of Special Needs Education at the Faculty of Education.
5. It is worth noticing that 'differentiation' was a major issue on the OECD agenda in the 1960s and 1970s, but these initiatives and projects did not include the education of disabled students. The latter issue came on the OECD agenda as a new project, focusing 'The Education of the Handicapped Adolescent', in the late 1970s (OECD, 1981).
6. Examples are issues like the *ethics-and-rights orientation* (Dyson, 1999; Barton, 1997), the *comprehensive school principle*, and the *education for all* visions as a reaction against exclusion on the basis of a range of student characteristics (Barton, 1999, p. 195; see also Booth, 1996; Booth, Ainscow and Dyson, 1997; Slee, 1999).
7. SEN, in the UK, referring to students having obtained *a statement* according to *a statutory assessment procedure* for having special educational needs (of

a particular type or category), currently widely in use in international discussions and statistical reports when referring to students with special educational needs.

8. Ainscow is Professor of Special Needs Education at the University of Manchester, and from 1988 the Director of the Unesco teacher education project: see Unesco (1993) and Ainscow (1994). The 'resource pack' (for meeting special needs in the classroom) was elaborated in the late 1980s, field tested in the early 1990s and produced in its final form in 1993.
9. Repeating the Salamanca Statement on efficiency and effectiveness: 'regular schools with this inclusive orientation … provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system' (Unesco, 1994, p. ix).
10. The *Index* was published in 2000 by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE, represented by Vaughan and Shaw) in collaboration with the University of Manchester (Ainscow) and Canterbury Christ Church University College (Booth).
11. The Norwegian Index for Inclusion team were Marit Strömstad and Kari Nes, Hedmark University College, Hamar.
12. Booth, Ainscow and Dyson (1997) report on using the Index as a means of exploring into the processes of exclusion and inclusion in one 'apparently inclusive' secondary school in the UK. Besides giving some insight into the balances struck between selective and inclusive practices in this school, the study also throws some further light on the basis for defining inclusion versus exclusion as processes in a school responding to the diversity of all its students.
13. The six 'ingredients' are regarded as overlapping and interrelated in a number of ways.
14. *Excellence for All Children. Meeting Special Educational Needs* (DfEE, 1997).
15. Vaughan's (CSIE) comments to the Green Paper, made available to members of the Inclusive Education Network by an e-mail communication of October 1997.
16. As an alternative to *segmentation*, Ringer refers to *tracks*.
17. Official and comparable data for analysing changes in the field in the western societies during the 1990s are not easily available. OECD data published in 1995 (actually drawn between 1987 and 1991) have been used as the starting-point. A new study by OECD (1999) was based on data drawn between 1995 and 1998 but according to a different methodology. Another relevant OECD report (2000) was developed on data obtained in 1996–7, but based on new definitions of special education. In the meantime, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education is the only organization so far having collected and published statistical data drawn from the later part of the 1990s (Meijer, 1998: data drawn in 1995–7). This set of data was considered as the best match for a comparison with the early 1990 OECD data. For more information concerning methodology and data collection for the data sets used in constructing the tables presented in this section, cf. OECD (1995) and Meijer (1998). Wide differences exist between countries in the range and in the detail of the statistics they collect on students with special educational needs. The *difficulties of constructing comparative statistical figures across European countries concerning disability and special education needs* must therefore be acknowledged.
18. Not included are Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Switzerland.
19. It is worth noticing that more students are *recommended for assessment* (by the class teacher, the health service, or others), *go through* the assessment procedure, and even *end up by being referred for special education* according to

the expert's advice *without actually being accepted and becoming 'recorded'* (the example is relevant for assessment practice in Norway, but may have relevance also for practice in other countries).

20. Denmark is omitted due to uncertain data.

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