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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN EUROPE. Theories, characteristics and outcomes

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Executive summary

This report summarises the main findings of *Cluster 1* within the *Includ-ed* project. This cluster consists of *Project 1* and *Project 2*. An overview of the main conclusions of these two projects is presented here.

Project 1 is aimed at identifying the characteristics of school systems and educational reforms which generate low rates of educational and social exclusion and those which generate high rates, throughout the EU-25. The INCLUD-ED researchers reviewed educational theories, reforms and outcomes at a European level. Based on our analysis, a differentiation between mixture, streaming and inclusion was made. Special attention was paid to the differentiation between these three practices and the use of resources related to each one of these options. Thus, in depth analyses were carried out in order to systematize the existing knowledge about these three practices, as well as to allow it to progress in different areas. For instance, based on the review, different types of streaming –the organisation of classroom activities according to ability levels, remedial groups, support segregated from the regular classroom, exclusionary individualised curriculums and exclusionary choice—were defined. Inclusive practices aim to respond to the diversity which can be found in the student body and at the same time to overcome educational inequalities. At the same time, different inclusive strategies were also defined: *Heterogeneous ability classrooms with additional resources*, *Inclusive split classes*, *Extending the learning time*, *Inclusive individualised curriculum* and *Inclusive choice*.

An analysis of community involvement in the schools and its contribution towards increasing the quality of education was carried out. *Community education* can be offered to families and the wider community in order to respond to their need for basic education in instrumental areas such as literacy or ICT. Family and community members can participate in school life as far as the education of their children is concerned. Along these lines, different types of community participation were identified through research for the Includ-ed project: *Informative*, *Consultative*, *Participation in decision making*, *Evaluative*, and *Educational*. These are all different with regards to the type and degree of participation, and the impact they may have on children's learning processes.

Project 2 is aimed at analysing the elements of educational practices that decrease school failure rates and the elements of practices that increase those rates. Two main tasks were carried out: a literature review on effective educational practices and twenty

case studies were carried out in order to identify elements of the aforementioned educational practices that are increasing school success. The case studies provided examples of practices involving inclusion and community involvement, which are linked to academic success. We found that these schools are not free from exclusionary practices; nor do they implement all of the inclusive practices identified. However, inclusive practices are predominant in these schools, and this thus supports the findings of the prior scientific literature review. Further research for the *Includ-ed* project will connect educational exclusion and inclusion with diverse areas of society, with diverse sectors of society, and with other areas of social policy, and this will be carried out in *Cluster 2*.

1. Introduction

This report summarises the main findings of *Cluster 1: Educational Systems in Europe. Theories, characteristics and outcomes*, within the Includ-ed project. Cluster 1 contains both *Project 1: European educational systems: connecting theories, reforms, and outcomes* and *Project 2: European effective educational practices: How is education contributing to overcome or reproduce social exclusion?*

For *Project 1*¹, an analysis of educational theories, reforms and outcomes at a European level was carried out. This aimed to identify the characteristics of school systems and educational reforms which generate low rates of educational and social exclusion and those which generate high rates, throughout the EU-25. Three different areas were examined: first, the literature on educational reforms, theories and policy developments in Europe, second, educational reforms in the EU-25, and third, educational outcomes in Europe.

For *Project 2*², a literature review on effective educational practices was carried out, as well as 20 case studies in 20 schools which are implementing effective educational practices. This analysis aimed to analyse the components of educational practices that decrease school failure rates and the components of practices that increase these rates. The case studies were carried out at different educational levels and in different programmes: 4 pre-primary schools, 4 primary schools, 4 secondary schools, 4 vocational training centres, and 4 special education programmes located in regular schools. The selection of these schools was based on two criteria. First, they had to be schools which have demonstrated that they contribute to academic success (as reflected by the children's or adolescents' progress in their educational attainment) in relation to their context. Second, they had to be schools with a low SES, containing students with a minority background. These criteria ensure that the selected schools are successful schools and that the practices they implement contribute to academic success.

Therefore, this synthesis report aims to identify the most significant exclusionary and transformative strategies based, on one hand, on contributions from the previous analyses of educational systems and, on the other hand, on school practices. The content of this report will also provide the framework for the following clusters, which have

¹ The main contributions of Project 1 are described in *Report 2: Theories, reforms and outcomes in European educational systems*.

² The main contributions of Project 2 are described in *Report 3: Educational practices in Europe. Overcoming or reproducing social exclusion*.

already begun: *Cluster 2: Connections between education and social exclusion and inclusion. Structures, social agents, and policies, and Cluster 3: Social cohesion from below. Strengthening social cohesion through education.*

2. Educational strategies in European educational systems. Impact on educational exclusion and inclusion

The analysis of educational theories, reforms and outcomes has made it possible to move forward the existing knowledge on the different existing strategies as well as to identify new ones.

Extensive research has been carried out demonstrating the impact of early tracking on disadvantaged students. All of these conclusions were recorded in the European Commission communication on Equity and Efficiency (2006). There, early tracking is defined as “the segregation of children into separate schools based on ability before the age of thirteen”, and concludes that whilst this does not necessarily involve a division into academic/general and vocational tracks, in practice this tends to be the case. The literature review analysis carried out for *Project 1* has shown that tracking before the age of 16 creates inequalities between groups of students, and that the earlier the tracking starts, the more inequalities there are between students placed on different tracks (Bauer & Riphahn, 2006; Brunello & Checchi, 2007; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2005).

Tracking provides lower levels of education and educational dead ends with limited options for retraining and reintegration into educational systems for those students placed on the lower tracks (Bauer & Riphahn, 2006; Brunello & Checchi, 2007; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2005). Inequalities due to tracking particularly affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as families with a low SES and cultural minority families (European Commission, 2006; EUMC, 2004; Mickelson & Heath, 1999; Orfield, 2001; Hallinan, 1994; Heath et al., 2008; European Commission, 2008). Moreover, the educational levels attained are related to the opportunities students have to be included into the labour market on a long term basis as well as the quality of employment they obtain (Wößmann, L. & Scütz, G., 2006; Descy, 2002; De Vries & Wolbers, 2005; Steijn, Need & Gesthuizen, 2003).

Along these lines, vocational training programmes can promote further training for people with low education levels, and have an inclusive function in the labour market. However they can also have an exclusionary impact when the choice of a vocational path rather than an academic one at a certain point on the educational pathway reduces subsequent opportunities to be involved in educational programmes (Brunello & Checchi, 2007).

The effective educational practices in vocational training that were studied in the case studies carried out for *Project 2* show that often, when an atmosphere of high expectations exists and methodologies based on quality are used, students are explicitly encouraged to continue studying before entering the labour market, and the majority do continue to study. Therefore, these schools have an inclusive function with regards to both inclusion into the labour market and the promotion of further education.

Besides tracking, curricular differentiation for different groups of students based on their ability also occurs within schools, and this is known as streaming (European Commission, 2006). Streaming is a common practice in Europe and it began as a response to traditional classrooms, in which one sole teacher has to teach a number of students who are usually diverse with regards to their attainment level. This practice, which we refer to as mixture, has demonstrated that it is not enough to respond to the difficulties in classes containing diverse students. As a response to the difficulties posed by mixture, streaming practices have been implemented, for example, creating smaller groups of students by including additional teachers into the classroom or outside the classroom. These additional teachers teach homogeneous groups of students, with similar levels of achievement. However, research has provided evidence that streaming is not an effective alternative. Streaming does not improve the overall performance of all of the students in schools in which it is implemented (Terwel, 2005), and it also increases the differences between the performance of the various students (William & Bartholomew, 2004; Terwel, 2005). High achievers either benefit from streaming, or their attainment is unaffected by it (Zimmer, 2003; Terwel, 2005), however the learning and achievement of low achievers is diminished by reducing the time they spend on instructional activities, the material, the content, the quality and the pace of instruction when streaming is implemented (Braddock & Slavin, 1992; Ireson, Hallam & Hurley, 2005; Terwel, 2005; Chorzempa & Graham, 2006). Streaming diminishes students' learning opportunities and achievement by reducing "the peer effect" (that high-ability students have on low-ability students) (Zimmer, 2003). Streaming also reduces the expectations of lower ability groups (William & Bartholomew, 2004; Ireson, Hallam & Hurley, 2005) and contributes to reducing academic self-esteem and feelings of competence (Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004). Finally, streaming reduces opportunities for upward mobility between streams and satisfaction with their stream placement (Hallinan, 1996; Hallam & Ireson, 2007). Moreover, streaming contributes to a higher likelihood that vulnerable groups are assigned to low-achieving groups (Braddock & Slavin, 1992; Hallinan, 1996; Lucas & Berends, 2002), and this contributes to segregation, categorisation, stigmatisation and social stratification (Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004; William & Bartholomew, 2004; Terwel, 2005). It not only does not contribute to better education for children with

disabilities, but in fact their attainment levels can be even lower (Dunn, 1968). Recently, international surveys have added evidence to this knowledge which supports that which was previously provided by the research.

The analysis of educational reforms in Europe carried out in Project 1 has led to the creation of a classification of four different types of streaming, which has been described in *Report 2: Theories, reforms and outcomes in European educational systems*. These types are: 1) *Organisation of classroom activities according to ability levels*, 2) *Remedial groups and support segregated from the regular classroom*, 3) *Exclusionary individualised curriculum* and 4) *Exclusionary choice*.

The four types of streaming are described below:

- a) **Organisation of classroom activities according to ability levels.** This practice involves creating groups of higher and lower performing students, within the classroom or in different classrooms. According to the analysis of educational reforms carried out in *Project 1*, ability groups are usually implemented in compulsory instrumental subjects, those which can have a greater impact on educational success and social inclusion. Besides, this practice specially affects students belonging to vulnerable groups. We found this in another school, in which students were divided into groups according to their competence in the local language. As observed in the reviewed literature, it is common to find that immigrant students are separated from native ones in instrumental subjects, and divided according to their different levels of language competence.

- b) **Remedial groups and support segregated from the regular classroom.** This practice consists of providing additional support to students with particular needs, segregating them from the regular classroom during school hours. Students assigned to special education, migrant students, students belonging to cultural minorities, and students with low performance levels in the language of instruction often receive this type of support. Some of the schools analysed in the case studies for *Project 2* are still implementing the aforementioned practices but at the same time are substituting them for more inclusive ones, so remedial groups are becoming less and less frequent in the effective experiences which were researched. According to the literature review carried out in *Project 1*, this can lead to labelling students and reducing instrumental learning objectives. In fact, studies have shown that integration and stigmatisation problems were found when they returned to the regular classroom, as well as a

reduction in the academic expectations of the teachers and of the students themselves.

- c) Exclusionary individualised curriculum.** This practice consists of adapting the curriculum to the level of a particular student or a group of students, which involves lowering the level of the curriculum in one or several subjects. Also in this case, this practice is used for specific groups of students such as those assigned to special education, migrant students or students who are not proficient in the official language.
- d) Exclusionary choice.** This practice involves a choice between different subjects. It is exclusionary because this choice of curricular subjects, which is often influenced by the social and economic status of the families and by teacher's expectations, leads to unequal future academic and social opportunities for students.

Inclusive practices

Inclusive practices aim to respond to the diversity which can be found in the student body and at the same time to overcome the educational inequalities that streaming helps to create. Two features of inclusive practices help to achieve this objective: the creation of heterogeneous groups of students (with regards to their level of attainment), and the inclusion of additional resources into the regular classroom.

Scientific literature has provided contributions regarding the effects of working with heterogeneous groups of students. It has shown that when students work in heterogeneous groups this contributes to improve the results and to a reduction in the differences between the attainment levels of students (Boaler, 2006). It also indicates that low achievers benefit from the pace of instruction used for high ability groups (Braddock & Slavin, 1992). Cooperative learning is one potential way to organise heterogeneous classrooms, and this has a positive impact on learning achievement, both for high and low achievers (Cesar & Santos, 2006; Schroeder, Scott, Tolson, Huang & Lee, 2007; Slavin, 1991; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). Additionally, it facilitates better attendance rates, better behaviour, and students feeling that they control their own academic fate, cooperativeness and altruism (Braddock & Slavin, 1992). Besides, in heterogeneous groups, peer interaction facilitates mutual respect, solidarity, acceptance of diversity (in terms of disability, culture, gender and attainment level) and collaboration

(Cesar & Santos, 2006; Boaler, 2006; Braddock & Slavin, 1992; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994; Slavin, 1991; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Elboj et al., 2002).

Some of the strategies that appear in the literature related to some types of heterogeneous classes include: allowing students to become a resource for those who need help (Stevens & Slavin, 1995), and promoting the participation of diverse professionals, volunteers and family members in the classrooms thus enhancing learning for all of the students as is the case in dialogic learning (Elboj et al., 2002). They also include implementing a high level curriculum which is accessible to all the students, providing assistance in the classroom, and extending the learning time for low achievers, as well as having high expectations (Braddock & Slavin, 1992). The strategies include taking into account the different types of students' abilities, assigning roles, competences and responsibilities, having high expectations and promoting interaction (Boaler, 2006; Lotan, 2006), as well as promoting the participation of students with disabilities in the same learning activities. They also include maintaining the same general objectives, promoting cooperative and interactive work with non-disabled peers and including the necessary resources into the classroom (Koutrouba, Vamvakari & Steliou, 2006; Meijer, Soriano & Watkins, 2003; Porter, 1997; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). These are all inclusive strategies which can be implemented in heterogeneous classrooms.

The results of Cluster 1 contribute to advance the knowledge about heterogeneous groups and to reach a new relevant knowledge related to inclusive education. In this way these results evidence that heterogeneous groups with additional human resources into the classroom is being the practice which is achieving better academic results and that is more effective in equal attainment student levels.

Particularly, with regards to students with disabilities, when heterogeneous classrooms are organised appropriately and the necessary resources are provided, students with disabilities achieve better academic results and have a better self-concept than those in segregated classrooms (Luster & Durrett, 2003; Fitch, 2003; Myklebust, 2006). Moreover, students with disabilities have more opportunities to interact in heterogeneous groups, to receive more support, develop better social skills and relationships, and are better prepared for being more independent in the future (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006). Furthermore, the inclusion of students with disabilities has no negative effects on their peers' performance, and in fact provides new learning opportunities (Fisher, Roach, & Frey, 2002; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

The five types of inclusive practices are described below, along with the evidence found in the case studies.

- a) Heterogeneous ability classrooms with additional resources.** As was defined in the Literature review on effective educational practices elaborated in *Project 2*, the main idea consists of organising diverse students in the regular classroom with additional support in the classroom –teaching staff, family members or members of the community in a volunteer basis. In some cases, this specific support is addressed to certain groups of students, such as those who are considered to require special education, migrant students, minority students, or students with language related difficulties, among others. In the different educational levels examined in the case studies we found practices in which students are grouped based on the criterion of heterogeneity and additional resources are included into the classrooms. The groups are created based on heterogeneity in terms of students' learning levels, ethnicity, gender and disabilities (also age in pre-primary education).

The inclusion of additional human resources helps to accelerate the lower achievers' learning pace and is especially important for disadvantaged children and young people, while it has a positive impact on the class as a whole. By incorporating additional adults into the classrooms, this practice allows the same curriculum to be taught to all of the students and facilitates individualised support. It avoids the need for adaptation involving lowering the quality of the material the students learn and taking students with more difficulties and with disabilities into a separate classroom, and contributes to academic success for everyone as well as good coexistence.

The inclusion of additional human resources occurs in different ways in the schools analysed. Apart from additional regular teachers, in some cases the special education teachers enter the regular classrooms as an extra resource to provide support to the students with disabilities, who would otherwise be segregated in the special classroom to receive this support. In other cases, adults other than teachers or educational professionals are incorporated into the classrooms. These include family members, people from the neighbourhood and other volunteers, who both act as a support in the classroom and provide the students with a wider and richer range of interactions. For example, there are schools in which parents or other adults volunteer as learning mentors and they help support the teachers' work, providing individual assistance to the students

with more difficulties. In other cases, these people are members of minority groups who come in to the classroom as teaching assistants.

One of the characteristics of these practices which have been highlighted is the increase of opportunity to interact among the students with different learning levels and paces, as well as with a wide range of diverse adults. Children learn in interaction with other more capable peers, therefore offering the possibility of interaction in heterogeneous groups especially helps students with more learning difficulties and those with special education needs, who have positive examples to follow. Therefore, academically strong students become a resource to help the others. It reinforces learning for all the students and promotes solidarity. *Cooperation classes, interactive groups* and *reading buddies* are some examples of effective practices which involve interaction in heterogeneous groups.

- b) Inclusive split classes.** This involves dividing the class group into two smaller heterogeneous groups of students, with an additional teacher, when teaching instrumental subjects. The analysis of the case studies on primary education has provided two practical examples that show how this practice can be implemented. The first one show how one teacher teaches each group at the same time, and in the second one, the first group comes to school one hour earlier than the second group and also leaves the school one hour earlier. This practice of “double teaching” reduces the number of students per group and provides the opportunity to receive more attention from the teacher and to focus on the students who need more attention. This practice was also found to exist at a secondary education level.
- c) Extending the learning time.** This inclusive measure consists of offering extra learning activities and support classes after the regular classes are over. This provides more support for the students who have more difficulties without segregating them from the regular classroom during school hours. The analysis of the case studies has shown different forms in which this practice is implemented. In some cases this support involves helping students to do their homework in *homework clubs*. In other cases the teachers support the students outside class hours, though *revision classes, consultation hours* or *prolonged day groups*, or can provide support on the weekends before high stakes exams. We found this practice both in the Primary and Secondary schools and it was found to be especially important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities. This practice is also carried out when teaching the

language of instruction to immigrant students, in order to help them when learning languages, and when learning other subjects in the curriculum. Learning support classes for students with disabilities are also implemented, and these aim to accelerate their learning while they are fully participating in the regular classes.

- d) Inclusive individualised curriculum.** This type of individualised curriculum does not involve reducing learning objectives as is the case with the exclusionary individualised curriculum. On the contrary, it is focused on adapting the teaching methods to facilitate the student' learning and to provide individualised attention in order to help consolidate each child's learning processes and to ensure that everyone attains the maximum possible learning levels. The *Individual Education Plan (IEP)* which is found in case studies is an example of this. This plan is one of the tools which facilitate the monitoring of students with disabilities or learning difficulties. Extra support measures and tailoring the curriculum to individuals can be implemented so that they can learn the same subjects as their peers. In some cases this can involve a reduction in the level of the material being taught for students with more severe disabilities; however, in order to be an inclusive practice, the general curriculum framework should cover all of the students.
- e) Inclusive choice.** Although we have not found clear evidence of this inclusive practice in the case studies on successful schools, this practice was found in the analysis of educational reforms. Inclusive choice involves a choice between different subjects at some stage of the educational pathway, but without leading not lead to subsequent unequal academic and social opportunities.

Besides these effective practices, another educational strategy has been identified in the case studies on successful schools. This consists of having high expectations and strong beliefs in the possibility that all students can achieve good academic results, which is communicated to students and helps to create positive attitudes and a predisposition for learning. These high expectations have been found in schools of different educational levels, and are considered to be important for all of the students, but in some cases it has specifically been highlighted in relation to immigrant students and also students with disabilities in regular schools.

3. Community involvement for educational success

The analysis of the literature and educational reforms and outcomes has led to the identification of different strategies to promote community involvement that contributes to school success.

Family and community education

Since student learning is influenced by the interactions they have with different social agents, not only teacher training but the education of all of the community member's children interact with is important. According to the literature review, improving the educational level of all the social agents can have a positive impact on student learning. Along these lines, several authors highlight the role interactions play in the learning environment and the importance of enhancing the role of the community in the school (Wenger, 1988; Wells, 1999; Rogoff et al, 2001). Some studies (Purcell-Gates, 1995; Soler, 2004) have focused on the way in which the participation of families in literacy processes creates new interactions within the family context. Some experiences such as the Learning Communities programme in Spain or the Lifelong Learning Centres in Malta work on the basis that it is possible to overcome social inequalities by promoting, basic education for family members, amongst other activities.

The 20 case studies on effective practices which have been carried out show that the schools analysed include family and community education practices amongst the actions they undertake. These were found in both primary and secondary education. Both teachers and families in these schools perceive that community education is important, and in cases in which there was a lack of community education parents expressed their interest in attending this type of classes.

The case studies have shown different forms in which this practice is implemented. In some schools, specific subjects such as computer classes and internet classes have been given priority as this is an area in which parents have many knowledge gaps. Also dialogic literary circles, in which family members read and discuss classic universal literature, have been developed within the framework of family and community education. In other cases, members of the community are hired by the school as learning mentors –they are often women with a low level of education– who are supported as far as their education and obtaining certificates to become teaching assistants is concerned. Furthermore, there are schools in which the education programmes that are carried out are specifically designed and implemented in order to respond to families' needs and

requests. The analysis of the case studies show that in cases in which family and community education is implemented, it contributes towards transforming family relationships, increasing the confidence of parents with low educational levels, and ensuring that school activities are valued more.

Community participation

Various contributions from the literature indicate that family and community involvement in schools enhance student achievement (Epstein, 1983; Grolnick, Kurowski & Gurland, 1999; Harvard Research Family Project, 2007; Henderson et al., 2002; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Pomerantz et al., 2005; Weiss, 2005; Dearing, Kreider, Simkins & Weiss, 2006; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; García, 2002). The importance of community participation is greater in the case of minority cultures, as it contributes to a better coordination between the activities which are carried out at home and those undertaken in the school, and also reduces the negative impact of the connection of the school to the hegemonic culture (Boscardin & Jacobson, 1996; Beckman et al., 1998; Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005; Aubert & Valls, 2003; Ringold, Orenstein & Wilkens, 2005; Gómez & Vargas, 2003). Finally, community participation plays a significant role with regards to contributing to overcoming gender inequalities in education. This goes beyond overcoming gender differences in educational achievement. It also represents moving beyond certain forms of traditional masculinity which, on the one hand, have a negative impact on boys' school performance and, on the other hand, influence gender relationships and the development of gender violence (Chambers et al., 2004; Francis, 1999; Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008; Francis, 1999). The transformation of interactions in the school environment and the involvement of female relatives and other women ("academic" and "non-academic" women) from the community in the school (Gómez, 2004; De Botton, Puigvert, & Sánchez, 2005) contributes to creating more egalitarian relationships and overcoming gender inequalities.

Throughout our analysis of educational systems, five types of community participation were identified in the European countries which were studied; these are all different with regards to the type and degree of participation. We found evidence of some of these types of participation in the effective educational practices which have been analysed in *Project 2*:

1. *Informative participation*. This consists of informing families about school activities, the running of the school and decisions which have been made, usually through parents attending meetings organised by the school. In the schools

analysed through the case studies, this type of participation is carried out through meetings and discussions with parents in which teachers inform parents about their children's academic success, learning activities and behaviour, as well as parents' individual consultation with teachers. This type of participation is mainly informative and does not have a direct impact on school decision-making processes or activities.

2. *Consultative participation.* In this case, the community is not only informed but also participates in the decision making processes in the school. However, this participation is limited to a consultative role, and it takes place mainly through the statutory bodies in the school. In the case studies which were carried out, evidences of this type of participation were found; these consisted of mandatory school governing bodies which consisted of elected community members, parents, school staff and local authority representatives.
3. *Participation in decision-making.* This type involves community participation in decision-making processes through their representation in the decision-making bodies. This participation goes beyond the mere consultation. Therefore, this participation contributes to monitoring school accountability in relation to their educational results and helps to improve the quality of the education provided. In the schools analysed, we found that there was active participation of families and other members of the community in decision making processes amongst the practices they implemented: families, in cooperation with community members and teachers decide on and organise school activities; they participate in decisions related to learning, the school organisation or the resolution and prevention of conflicts. Besides, the analysis of the case studies has provided data on the fact that parental participation in decision making processes is especially important in multicultural contexts; particularly, we found cases in secondary education in which community involvement in the school led to the active engagement of the minority immigrant community.
4. *Evaluative participation.* In this type of participation families become involved in the learning process of the students in the school, by means of assisting children's evaluation. Although some evidence was found of this in the review of educational reforms, no clear evidence of this practice was found in the schools analysed.
5. *Educational participation.* In this type of participation, families participate in the learning process of students at school, by means of intervening in students'

learning activities. We found evidence of this type of participation amongst the effective educational practices analysed at the primary, secondary and vocational level. One form in which this participation takes place consists of the participation of family members as volunteers in the children's learning activities, inside the regular classroom. This participation helps the class teacher to attend to all the children, and therefore learning and coexistence are improved and the diversity of the interactions that the children experience increase. In cases in which non-academic women from the community participate in students' learning activities, this contributes to overcoming gender stereotypes, since the students improve the opinion they have of these women, who they can learn from. Educational participation also takes place in after school classes; this occurs in secondary and vocational schools, where parents participate along with children in after school ICT classes, or when they volunteer as learning mentors working with students on course work in the afternoons, or when they are in the school library helping the children to do their homework. Besides, the case studies have provided data on the fact that parental participation in learning activities has been shown to be especially important in multicultural contexts.

4. Conclusions

This synthesis report has presented an overview of the main results from Cluster 1 in the *Includ-ed* project. These results arose both from the theory and the practice and identified the main educational strategies which contribute to academic success. Inclusive strategies and community involvement are the two main areas which were explored here. On the one hand, it is necessary to organise educational systems and schools in such a way that students are not segregated according to their level of attainment. Within the framework of educational systems, this involves avoiding early tracking or delaying it to guarantee better levels of lifelong inclusion for all students. Within schools, it involves working with heterogeneous groups of students and at the same time ensuring that everyone learns the material set out in the curriculum in order to achieve academic success. Inclusive practices such as including additional human resources into the classroom or dividing the class into heterogeneous groups with additional teachers, extending the learning time for students with more difficulties and individualising the curriculum to facilitate student learning help towards the achievement of educational success. Greater involvement of the families and the wider community in schools also contributes to children's achievement. Firstly, the community can access the school facilities in order to receive basic education in instrumental areas, which transforms the children's environment and their interactions. Secondly, the community can participate in the school not only by being informed about the school's organisation but also by taking part in decision-making processes and in the students' learning activities. Both types of participation contribute to increasing the quality of schools.

The successful schools which were analysed are not free from exclusionary practices, for instance, some are struggling to promote family and community involvement. Neither all of the effective practices are implemented in all of the schools which were analysed. However, inclusive practices are predominant in these schools, which support the findings of the prior literature review. These findings represent the components of educational systems and practices which contribute to educational success. At the same time, they provide the framework for *Cluster 2: Connections between education and social exclusion and inclusion. Structures, social agents and policies*, which will analyse

the connection between education and diverse areas of society (project 3³), diverse sectors of society (project 4⁴), and other areas of social policy (project 5⁵).

³ The objective of Project 3 is to analyse how educational exclusion affects exclusion from diverse areas of society (i.e. employment, housing, health, political participation) and what kind of educational provision contributes to overcome it.

⁴ The objective of Project 4 is to analyse how educational exclusion affects diverse sectors of society, particularly the most vulnerable groups (i.e. women, youth, migrants, cultural groups and people with disabilities), and what kind of educational provision contributes to overcoming their respective discrimination.

⁵ The objective of Project 5 is to analyse the mixed interventions between educational policy and other areas of social policy and to identify which of these are making progress towards overcoming social exclusion and building social cohesion in Europe.

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