The Need for a more Dynamic and Ecological Assessment of Children Experiencing Barriers to Learning to move towards Inclusive Education: a Summary of Results of the Daffodil Project

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Abstract

Although governments have recognized the need to make education more accessible to children with developmental disabilities and/or learning difficulties, many children remain excluded from participation in regular school settings, let alone receive adequate education. Though every country which ratified the United Nations (UN) 2006 Convention on the Rights of People with Disability has committed itself to inclusive education, there are many obstacles. One of them is the currently preferred way of assessing children with standardized, psychometric diagnostic tests with a classifying purpose. This type of assessment, based on a medical impairment model and a static model of intelligence, results in reports which are sometimes not very useful for educational advice.
This paper reports an overview of the results of the DAFFODIL project (Dynamic Assessment of Functioning and Oriented at Development and Inclusive Learning), created by a consortium of eight European partners in order to research more inclusive alternatives and suggest reforms to assessment and coaching procedures. It starts with a critical review of current assessment practices; then it presents criteria for good practices for assessing children with additional educational needs in a more dynamic, inclusion-oriented and contextual way. A Delphi procedure was used by 150 professionals and parents to develop a consensus for guidelines for assessment procedures oriented at mapping functional difficulties, context, interaction and possibilities for learning, with the objective to understanding learning processes, to develop more inclusive, challenging and suitable educational programmes and more useful recommendations for teachers, parents and rehabilitation staff.

**Keywords**


**Background**

Since the 2006 United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of People with Disability grants every child the right to be and to study in a regular school environment, and compels governments to remove obstacles against inclusive education, many European countries have changed their legislation and practice. Despite longstanding or more recent incentives, many children remain either excluded from adequate educational opportunities or are being raised in separate educational environments (EADSNE, 2008a). The number of children being labelled as having “Special Educational Needs (SEN)” is increasing. In particular, children from ethnic minorities or less favourable socio-economic circumstances are at risk of underachieving and falling out of the educational system early. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development stated that one in five children has serious difficulties with reading, writing and mathematics in primary school (OECD, 2012). In 2003, Finland – the country with the world’s best academic achievements for all children, including the socio-economically deprived - reported that 17% children had special education needs. This was reduced to 7.96%, in 2007/8