



# **iNcLuSive EduCation**

## **Contributions from an experience in Uruguay**

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info@monocromo.com.uy  
Phone: +598 (2) 400 1685  
Montevideo, Uruguay

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# Foreword

Based on the commitments assumed by the international community during the Millennium Summit, multilateral agencies are working with national governments to promote the principles of inclusion and equal opportunity, within the overall goal of socio-economic development. The disability issue is intrinsically linked to this agenda.

Worldwide, disabilities affect at least 600 million people, 400 million of whom live in the poorest countries. If these individuals are denied inclusion in the development strategies, it will be impossible to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015, as established under the Millennium Declaration. If children with disabilities are denied access to schools, it will be impossible to meet the goal of providing every girl and boy with the opportunity to complete their primary education by 2015.

Inclusive Education is an essential element for ensuring that all children will be educated, regardless of their physical or sensory condition or level of intellectual development. The World Bank collaborates with governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to introduce activities and projects that promote Inclusive Education as a quality enhancement strategy for all students. While recognizing the important role of special education institutions, particularly as training and resource centers for regular schools and teachers in general,

the World Bank places a high priority on the inclusion of all children in the regular education system, including boys and girls with disabilities and/or with learning difficulties.

The absence of adequate transportation, the lack of teacher training for dealing with the needs of students with disabilities, problems with equipment and infrastructure in school buildings, scarce educational materials, and inflexible school curricula are just a few of the more frequent and obvious obstacles to quality education for all children. But the main obstacle is the lack of knowledge concerning the great benefits of inclusion and the even greater costs of exclusion.

Among other initiatives and activities in the field, the World Bank is currently focusing on developing implementation guidelines to ensure that all new schools are accessible and that all teacher training activities have components on Inclusive Education.

In the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, the most recent projects have already adopted this approach. This book documents one of these projects - the Inclusive Education initiative developed in Uruguay since early 2000, as part of MECAEP<sup>1</sup>, a national quality education project financed by the World Bank. The MECAEP project in Uruguay illustrates some of the numerous mechanisms for

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1 The first MECAEP Project began in 1994. It is arguably one of the most innovative educational projects in Latin America, having introduced regular student assessments, the development of Educational Improvement Projects, implementation of fulltime schools, and universal preschool enrollment. A decade after the MECAEP Project was first implemented, Uruguayan schoolchildren participated in the PISA evaluation and achieved some of the best scores in the Region.

promoting Inclusive Education. The project provides a valuable example of what a country can do to inspire and encourage the educational community to ensure inclusion in the classrooms, and through the classrooms, to reach the homes with a new educational paradigm, oriented towards diversity and the inclusion of all.

The MECAEP experience has demonstrated that it is possible to effectively expand coverage and move beyond special settings exclusively dedicated to disabled pupils. By providing financial support directly to regular schools, on the request of the school communities and according to their particular needs, new solutions, resources and opportunities for inclusion and a better quality of education for all school children were generated throughout Uruguay.

The funds can cover technical assistance for teacher training, implementation and monitoring of curriculum adaptations, school transport, building accessibility, pedagogic materials and resources.

Besides the direct impact on pupils' education, it helps generate extensive awareness-raising in the educational system and in the community at large.

In presenting this experience, the World Bank seeks to review and expand its own role in the area of Inclusive Education, beyond the financial support provided to countries to implement programs, but also promoting knowledge and practice for a real inclusive approach to development.

*Ricardo Rocha Silveira*  
SENIOR ECONOMIST, LAC  
EDUCATION SECTOR  
WORLD BANK

*Rosangela Berman Bieler*  
LAC DISABILITY AND INCLUSIVE  
DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST,  
WORLD BANK

# Introduction

This report describes an experience, developed jointly by the Uruguayan National Department of Public Education (ANEP) and the World Bank, of the implementation of an Inclusive Education component<sup>2</sup>. The goal is to demonstrate a concrete example of what countries can do to implement such inclusive education in practice, within the framework of strategies proposed by the “Education for All” initiative and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This document does not attempt to provide either details of the conceptual framework or political arguments for setting the international guidelines of inclusive education programs<sup>3</sup>, but rather responds to the demand for practical examples that illustrate an operational strategy. One of the promising characteristics of the Uruguayan experience with the implementation of the Inclusive Education component was that it did not require additional programs or resources; rather, the process was incorporated as a new tool within an overall strategy for improving the quality of education in the country. Although the fact that the component has only

recently been implemented (2003) prevents an exhaustive study of its results and impact thus far, publicizing the experience internationally is justified due to the need for documentation of actual experiences developed on a national scale. It is hoped that this will allow the public to envisage models for the implementation of inclusive education.

The report was prepared by Sergio Meresman under the supervision of Rosangela Berman Bieler and Ricardo Rocha Silveira for the Department of Human Development, Latin America and the Caribbean Region, World Bank, and received funding from the government of the Netherlands. The report was based on documents and contributions from the Board of Primary Education (ANEP-CODICEN), Uruguay, elaborated by Teresita González de Tantessio, Gladys Delgado, Luis Belora, Ivonne Vidal, Stella de Armas, Anahir Martinol, and Rosario Valdés. In the chapter dedicated to evaluation proposals, we considered drafts made by the Department of Educational Improvement Projects from CEP and by Helena Vianna.

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2 The funding for Inclusive Education does not represent an “institution” within itself but the resources equivalent to one million US dollars mobilized to support Educational Improvement Programs in the framework of the Improvement of the Quality of Primary Education. A significant part of these resources were earmarked in favor of Inclusion Projects

3 For further information on the conceptual aspects and main conclusions on inclusive education, we recommend the report “Education for All-Together: including children with disabilities”, by Susan Peters, part of the World Bank Series on Education.

# Executive Summary

This document describes the experience developed jointly by the National Department of Public Education (ANEP) of Uruguay and the World Bank in the implementation of an Inclusive Education component.

In 2003 and 2004, the Inclusive Education component supported the implementation of School Inclusion Projects in 125 Schools of Regular Education and in 13 School Inclusion Projects in Uruguay. The regular schools are using Inclusive Education funds to provide architectural improvements (to facilitate access and mobility for children with visual, hearing, or mobility disabilities within the school space), to obtain specialized support and training for its teachers to meet the academic needs of all their students, and to promote inclusive participation by families and the overall community. Special education institutions and civil society organizations participated in the strategy as support and advisory resources.

The implementation of an Inclusive Education component attempts to reinforce social integration based on equality and poverty reduction and decreasing exclusion in Uruguay. Since “inclusive education” aims to contribute to quality education for everyone, the benefits of this project are not limited to children with disabilities or special academic needs but extend to the entire school

population. By modernizing teaching, learning strategies, and promoting the development of social, cognitive, and emotional skills, better participation and performance can be achieved both inside the school and out.

Introducing Inclusive Education funding as a component of an on-going program to improve academic quality utilized the previous learning and accumulated experience of Uruguayan teachers and schools in designing and implementing projects. This facilitated a rapid integration at the level of regular and special schools while the regional education authorities’ (called Departmental Inspections in Uruguay) participation in the process was based on their own specific needs and resources.

Students with disabilities and other special academic needs participate in an inclusion process whose goal is total inclusion in academic life. Schools benefiting from the provision of the technical and financial assistance needed to carry out such improvements must adapt their teaching and learning strategies to each student’s needs and capabilities.



# I

## ALTERNATIVES FOR SCHOOL INCLUSION



## 1. What is Inclusive Education?

Many children enrolled in school as well as many who are not currently attending school have special needs.

**Inclusive Education** is an essential resource for these children, reintegrating them and defending their space in school. The fundamental principle is that all children should have the same opportunity to learn, and that everybody benefits when children with disabilities are included. This means that regular schools should be prepared not only to recognize and meet the needs of all students, including those who have traditionally been excluded from access to education, but also to ensure their participation in school under equitable conditions.

(4) Children with different abilities and socio-cultural situations learn together. (It is more inclusive.)

There are many more children with disabilities than most people realize. According to a 1991 report by the Special United Nations Rapporteur on Human Rights and Persons with Disabilities, in most

Inclusive schools are built by the participation and agreement of all educational stakeholders and view their students' integration in the school as a part of the learning process. Inclusive schools are based on the rights of all children to be recognized, and to recognize themselves, as members of a community to which they belong, regardless of their social or cultural background, ideology, gender, ethnicity, or personal differences resulting from a physical, intellectual, or sensory disability or intellectual gift.

"Inclusive education" requires an adaptation of schools and teachers to the diverse and individual needs of their students.

Diversity itself benefits the school, teachers, and students, by allowing them to recognize the similarities and differences reflected in their community. The ultimate objective is a healthy and productive population in which everyone contributes fully to and enjoys economic, social, and cultural habitation.

countries **at least one out of ten persons has a physical, cognitive, or sensory disability** (the latter includes deafness and blindness). These 10% represent approximately 50 to 55 million primary school-age children in developing countries. Of these, it is estimated that fewer than 5% finish primary school - a goal set by the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All initiative.

Of a total of 411,000 students registered in Uruguayan Elementary Education, about 8,800 go to special education schools (boys and girls with intellectual, visual, mobility disabilities, and with personality disorders). Another 3,900 children with disabilities are integrated in the regular schools. These children differ in the types and levels of their disabilities that include learning, speech, physical, mobility, cognitive, sensory, behavioral, and emotional. Some have disabilities that are neither obvious nor easily detected. These children are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out early or to repeat a grade. Inclusive Education places

emphasis on the individual contributions that these children make to the schools they attend, providing opportunities for them to play an active role while overcoming the physical and social barriers that limit their access.

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the beneficiaries of an inclusive education are lim-

ited to children with disabilities. Diversity benefits the school population as a whole by generating changes that revitalize the social, cognitive, and emotional skills and performance of everyone in the school community.

## 2. The challenge of diversity

The difficulties arising from each child's specific needs can be compensated for, minimized, or even aggravated by the educational response and characteristics of the school setting in which the child develops. Each school has its own culture, knowledge, values, rituals, and expectations; its own structure and functional dynamics; and its formal and informal communication networks. All of this af-

fects the school's resistance (or willingness) to change, its flexibility in the face of pressure, and its capacity for openness to diversity. The degree of institutional identity also indicates the viability of a homogeneous culture coexisting within various heterogeneous cultures, in tandem with a new regulation of different achievement levels.

### 3. What are special educational needs?

*Special educational needs* (whether temporary or permanent) refer to barriers that act to block or halt learning and participation and which affect a large number of persons and situations. Nevertheless, there is a longstanding tradition that equates “Special Education” exclusively with students with disabilities, without taking other types of children and needs into account.

It is also true that “special educational needs” do not necessarily have to be met through specialized services or more sophisticated materials than those used in a regular classroom. Transformed teaching practices, as a starting point, can help to solve many of the requirements of children with special needs.

The barriers that prevent boys and girls with special educational needs from actively participat-

ing and enjoying school are related to highly diverse factors, including the following:

- Cultural and attitudinal barriers involving discriminatory behaviors by other children, their families, and teaching staff.
- Teacher training, which does not always prepare teachers to approach the special needs of their students.
- Curricular design, evaluation and promotion systems which tend to be based on standard, non-inclusive models.
- Lack of complementary technical and pedagogical resources to reinforce the school’s ability to deal with diversity.

## 4. Why include?

All over Latin America and the Caribbean, schools have been rethinking their work based on new paradigms and premises, seeking to introduce other ways of reasoning, working, and living as a community. It is now widely recognized that high-quality public education is a universal right and a fundamental element of social inclusion. It is also acknowledged that every child has a unique capacity and potential which therefore requires a unique educational response to realize.

The overall challenge for the future is as simple and complex as answering the following questions: Which values should a school impart in an increasingly segregated, violent, and competitive society? Which knowledge should be transmitted as a priority? What should be done in order to move a school towards greater equality and better quality?

The value of **Inclusive Education** lies in the possibility of diversifying teaching-learning strategies, adjusting institutional frameworks, linking in different ways the approaches which students take to

complete their course of study, highlighting the evolution of each learning process and taking into consideration the different pace required by each individual student.

The main challenge of the new century will be to successfully make diversity an enriching experience for all concerned. Dealing with this challenge requires taking a chance on new educational, cultural, political, legal, technological, and economic proposals. It will require a global effort to render the emerging globalized world viable and sustainable. School inclusion becomes effective when a set of institutional, social, and community actions adapt and are organized, planned, and made operational, in order to guarantee a feeling of ownership and inclusion. This means not only placing students with disabilities or other special needs in regular classes, but also removing the barriers that prevent their participation, thereby accepting and placing value on individual differences.

## 5. International Legal Framework

A vast international legal framework for children with disabilities regulates their right to Inclusive Education and establishes the responsibility of states to provide it:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989)
- First World Conference on Education for All (Jontien, 1990)
- Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Organization of American States, 1999)
- Uniform Standards for Equality of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993)
- World Conference on Special Educational Needs, Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)
- Santiago Statement, Second Summit of the Americas (1998)
- World Education Forum, Dakar (2000)
- Meeting of Ministers of Education from Ibero-America (2000)
- Millennium Summit (New York, 2000)
- 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Educational Inclusion (San Luis, 2002)

What all of these conventions, laws, decrees, declarations, and regulations express is the singular commitment of states to effectively incorporate people with different capacities into various aspects of community life. While their scope varies in terms of applicability or enforcement, their main objective is to combat discrimination and to uphold the rights of children and adolescents. This public policy also includes the rights of people with disabilities.

## 6. Is Inclusive Education more expensive?

In the past, many governments failed to provide education for children with disabilities in regular schools, claiming that educational inclusion is too costly and produces limited benefits. However, the evaluation of international experiences in educational inclusion<sup>1</sup> has demonstrated that it is no more expensive to educate a child with special educational needs in a regular school than in a special school. In fact, a 1994 study by OECD estimated that the inclusion of children with special educational needs in regular classes might be seven to nine times less expensive than placement in special schools.<sup>2</sup> Research has also demonstrated that when an inclusive education approach is adopted, there is an increase in overall learning performance by children involved.

The costs of exclusion on the other hand are high in terms of lost productivity, wasted human potential, and harm to health and wellbeing, as shown in the following table:

TOTAL ANNUAL GDP LOST DUE TO DISABILITIES		
GDP LOST BILLIONS OF U\$)	MAXIMUM ESTIMATE	MINIMUM ESTIMATE
High-income countries	1,300	900
Medium-income countries	480	339
Low-income countries	192	135
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,936</b>	<b>1,365</b>

Source: R. L. Metts (2000)

1 Audit., HMI Commission on Special Education (1992) in CSIE Inclusion Information Guide, [www.inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie](http://www.inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie)

2 OCDE (1994). *L'intégration scolaire des enfants et adolescent handicapés. Ambitions, théories et pratiques*. Paris: OCDE. It is necessary to recognize the need to maintain the focus on "special education" in some cases. Nearly all countries still provide special education for some deaf and blind children. For the deaf population, for example, the positive self-image developed by children in a setting in which sign language is used can be more valuable than the benefits resulting from their inclusion in a regular class.





# 2

## THE URUGUAYAN EXPERIENCE



## 1. Educational context

Uruguay was a pioneer in Latin America in achieving universal primary education (since the late 1950s). This important achievement has been strengthened in recent years through a strong investment at the preschool level, allowing the country to rapidly universalize access for the four-to-six-year-old population.

But in addition to achieving universal access, Uruguay has decidedly invested in improving educational quality and retention rates in primary education, so that some 90% of the population now finishes six years of primary education, placing the country above average for Latin America and on the road to achieving the same standards as developed countries.

Rapid social transformations in recent decades and deterioration of “educability conditions” (Lopez-Tedesco, 2002) for a major portion of children attending public schools have created an unprecedented opportunity for education in Uruguay. The conditions for educability deteriorate when families cannot guarantee their children’s preparation for the requirements of school and when the schools fail to adapt in order to compensate for difficulties that accompany social, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

Thus the existence of “special educational needs” transcends the issue of disability. There is a growing need to adapt the school curriculum and the teaching-learning process if we wish to cover all stu-

The transition from social homogeneity to one of heterogeneity represents not only one of the principal challenges for policies in the educational sector but also an opportunity for rethinking schools through the paradigm of inclusion.

dents in public primary schools. The transition from the social homogeneity paradigm towards one characterized by heterogeneity and equality is one of the principle challenges for policies in the educational sector. This means an opportunity for conceiving our schools through the paradigm of inclusion by:

- fostering new forms of teaching, in keeping with the “conditions for educability” and including everyone;
- providing greater flexibility of institutional frameworks in order to seek a better link between families and the school community; and
- an inclusive approach to the completion of students’ course of study in school, highlighting each student’s progress as required case by case, so as to interrupt the vicious circle of segregation and resignation by the weakest.

## 2. Attention to “special educational needs” in Uruguay

In Uruguay, the right to education is linked to the democratic tradition and ideals of the founders of a public school system based on the principles of universal, free, and mandatory schooling and has been a model in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Historically, attention to children with “special educational needs” has been the responsibility of Special Education Schools. The noteworthy expansion of special schools led to a total of 75 establishments nationwide by the mid-1960s, a figure that has remained constant since then, reflecting a policy that seeks to invest public resources in inclusive approaches and equal opportunities.

Along with these developments in the field of Special Education, Uruguay has been a pioneer in the Latin American and Caribbean region in terms of including deaf and blind children in regular schools. This policy was also backed for many years by placing teachers with visual and hearing disabilities in regular schools.

In 1985, with the return of democracy to the country, the Board of Primary Education developed a Special Education Project proposing the elimination of closed classes in regular schools, moving toward a system of support classes for students with special educational needs. Pioneering experiences were conducted, such as that in School No. 70 and several kindergartens, in which the goal has been to train and advise regular school teachers. This process led to the creation of “support teachers” and “itinerant teachers”, trained to respond to the per-

sonalized educational needs of disabled children integrated within the framework of regular schools.

Since 2001, collaborative projects have been carried out with the Organization of American States (OAS) in 6 schools in Montevideo.<sup>1</sup> These projects emphasize teacher training and extend the concept of special educational needs to include those resulting from critical socioeconomic settings, while expanding into secondary education.

The “Educational Policy Guidelines” proposed for 2001-2004 provide a new milestone that additionally demonstrates an inclusive and pro-diversity approach to the management of overall educational policies. These guidelines emphasize the need to foster successful learning through a series of tools based on inclusive attention to special educational needs:

- Teacher’s attention to each child’s individual pace and unique characteristics;
- Attention to the diversity of cultural and psychosocial situations;
- Promotion of teaching strategies that are adjusted to work with diverse populations;
- Orientation of school management according to children’s rights; and
- Coordination of intra- and inter-institutional integration while facilitating networks for school-community interaction.

1 “Educating through Diversity in the Mercosur Countries”, a Multinational Project for Technical Assistance and Personnel Training in Special Education, OAS

### 3. Legal Framework

International norms and commitments signed by Uruguay in the Treaties for the Rights of Children and the International Conventions on Disability provide the inspiration and form for educational policies that seek inclusion of all children in school. National Act No. 16.095 (1989) on “Comprehensive Protection for Persons with Disabilities” establishes the principle of “equalization of opportunities” and safeguards the right to education for children with

disabilities or other special educational needs, in addition to emphasizing the importance of promoting inclusive environments in the school and community.<sup>2</sup>

Within this framework, Uruguay is currently reviewing the school standards and rules related to grading and passing systems to adjust them to the principles of diversity and seeks to allow all children to obtain appropriate certification for their course of study in school.

### 4. Alternatives for School Inclusion

Students with “special educational needs” (resulting from disability or otherwise) can be part of a school inclusion project in a regular school through various curricular options:

**Option 1:** The student participates in all activities in the regular course and receives specialized attention in an individual class with the help of a special itinerant teacher (in a complementary mode).

**Option 2:** The student participates in all the activities of the regular class and attends the resource classroom with a special itinerant teacher for those learning areas or sub-sectors in which he or she requires more significant curricular adaptations.

**Option 3:** The student participates in some learning sub-sectors with the regular class, while the areas or

sub-sectors with the curriculum adapted to his or her special educational needs are conducted in the resource classroom with specialized itinerant support.

**Option 4:** The student participates in a special curriculum, attending all the activities in the specialized classroom while sharing recess, official acts and ceremonies, and extracurricular activities in general with his or her schoolmates. This represents an option for the child’s physical and social integration.

**Option 5:** The student participates in all educational activities of the regular class and receives help from its teacher, providing access to activities with increasing levels of difficulty which take the student’s needs into account.

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2 Other pertinent Uruguayan legislation includes Act 16592 on “Severe Disabilities”; Act 13711 on “Diagnosis of Mental Retardation”; Act 16095 on the “System for Guaranteeing Comprehensive Protection for People with Disabilities”; and Act 16,169, “Amendment to Provision of the Act on the System for Comprehensive Protection”.

# 3

## DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION COMPONENT



## 1. Composition of the Inclusive Education component

The development of an Inclusive Education component emerged in Uruguay in 2003 as part of the process of Improvement in Educational Quality that the country had been implementing since 1994.

With resources from the National Department of Public Education and the World Bank, the Inclusive Education component funds school inclusion projects, providing Uruguayan schools with an opportunity to practice school inclusion policies with an overall strategy of defending equity and improving educational quality.

The integration of the Inclusive Education strategy as a sub-component of the Project for Quality Improvement in Primary Education (MECAEP) al-

lowed the country to capitalize on the lessons learned and the experience accumulated by teachers and schools in the formulation and management of Educational Improvement Projects (PME).

The Inclusive Education component is implemented within the framework of a set of social policies aimed at strengthening social integration on the basis of equity and the reduction of poverty and exclusion in Uruguayan society.

## 2. A contribution to educational quality

The **Inclusive Education component** reaffirms a commitment to quality that transcends the traditional view of disability and the way schools respond to special educational needs by joining with (and contributing) to the overall processes of institutional empowerment, autonomous school management, teacher training and development, and strengthening of family-school-community links.

Educational quality requires enriching the processes by which students develop their learning experience. It involves adjusting and updating the curricular content and teaching activities as ways of helping students develop socially significant and relevant learning, allowing them to perform adequately on cognitive, emotional, productive, ethical, and social levels.

The implementation of Educational Improvement Projects with financing from the Inclusive Education component aspired to advance two concrete objectives:

1. *Decentralization of schools, school autonomy and strengthening of educational institutions' Pedagogical Projects (i.e., Educational Development Projects or School Projects) as a way of tangibly improving the quality of teaching and learning.*

Educational Improvement Projects have become an effective tool for autonomous school management in Uruguay, since teachers themselves (in consultation with children and their families) conduct an analysis of the school's overall situation and its variables (physical, spatial, organizational, and relational), interpreting what is most visible while bringing to light the more obscure factors that condition

The integration of the Inclusive Education component as a sub-component of a broader educational program already under way allowed the country to capitalize on the lessons learned and the experience accumulated by teachers and schools in the formulation and management of Educational Improvement Projects.

the life of the educational community. As a result they are able to build their own path towards the implementation of educational changes, identifying the difficulties, effecting the possible changes and maximizing the strengths and resources of both the school institution and the community.

Participating schools have shown progress in the development of strategies for autonomy. Favorable indicators of this process include the growing use of innovative teaching and learning methodologies, increased opportunities for teacher training, and strengthening of family-school-community ties.

2. *Establishing conditions and strategies for the inclusion of all children.*

In a context of significant socioeconomic deterioration and social transformations that affect all groups, schools are increasingly committed to their role of integrating and weaving the social fabric. The exclusion of underprivileged boys and girls (either because of their varying abilities or differences resulting from their socio-cultural backgrounds) raises the challenge for educational institutions to provide an appropriate response to such diversity.





# 4

## THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL



## 1. A tool for change

The **Educational Improvement Projects (PMEs)** are an initiative of the National Department of Public Education (ANEP), the head educational authority in Uruguay. The Projects' implementation is made possible by national budget funds from the Board of Primary Education (CEP) and financing from the World Bank, within the framework of the Project for Quality Improvement in Primary Education (MECAEP).

Uruguay began implementing the PMEs in 1995 as a tool for institutional and pedagogical transformation with the aim of producing a positive impact on the quality of learning. **The Educational Improvement Projects aim to enrich the teaching-learning process and provide the school with a medium- and long-term plan to integrate classroom and extra-curricular activities in a theme chosen by the educational community itself, based on its relevance and capacity to optimize learning processes at all levels.**

Until 2001 the Educational Improvement Projects underwent a process of experimentation and validation under the MECAEP. Having evaluated their success and achieved consolidation, the Projects were incorporated institutionally as a regular program by the Board of Primary Education. MECAEP monitors the entire process of capacity-building for the schools in both the drafting of proposals and the management of projects.

Since the beginning of the program in Uruguay, more than 1,600 PMEs have been funded, reaching a total of nearly 420,000 students and at least 18,050 teachers participating directly. Some 64% of these PMEs have targeted urban schools, 19% rural schools, and 17% special schools. More than half of the projects are in schools with students from socially underprivileged backgrounds. An average of one out of three proposals has been funded, and each project has lasted from one to two years.

The funds allocated have averaged US\$ 2,100 per project, depending on the size of the student body at each school.

Educational Improvement Projects provide schools the opportunity to invest in change by means of strategies emerging from the teaching staff and as a function of the existing curriculum, where children are the center of the teaching process.

## 2. Types of Educational Improvement Projects (PMEs)

From their initial implementation until 2001, the PMEs covered the more traditional areas of the school curriculum: Language, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Art Education, as well as those linked to crosscutting areas: Education in Values, Health, and Environment. These PMEs are known as “classics”.

In the year 2002 a new classification was adopted to give greater specificity to projects in the areas of Health and the Environment. These projects aimed to integrate “*education for life and the environment*” into the school’s daily functioning as part of a commitment to the children’s formation and development, fostering healthy habits and responsible behaviors between themselves and their environment.

Through the Educational Improvement Project, the school seeks to generate spaces for creation and reflection that allow it to identify its main problems and build possible strategies to solve them, with the teaching staff as directors in the process of change and the children as its main protagonists.

### 3. Preliminary Results

An impact study conducted in Uruguay in 2000 showed the following in relation to Educational Improvement Projects:

- The Projects improve school efficiency and efficacy in management and scheduling.
- They strengthen teachers' work culture and improve their relations with students' families and communities.
- They improve students' curricular performance.
- They help reduce the gap between the academic performances of schools from privileged and underprivileged socioeconomic settings.
- From 1996 and 1999, the improvement in student performance was greater in schools with PME as compared to the national average.

In addition, it was shown that the benefits of PMEs go beyond their direct educational impact on students. The school dynamics as a whole are transformed when PMEs are implemented. These include the relationship between school and community, teachers and students, and among teachers themselves, all of whom are concentrated on a project with a common objective. This kind of teamwork strengthens and increases the level of motivation, which influences everyone's attitudes. The preparation alone of a work plan to submit as a proposal for a PME is a highly positive step because of the critical analysis and strategic thinking it requires of the school.

## 4. PME for School Inclusion and Transformation of Teaching Practices

The **PME for School Inclusion and Transformation of Teaching Practices (ITP/PME)** incorporated in Uruguay since 2003 are another highly valuable resource for the democratization of education. They are implemented within a series of public policies aimed at strengthening social integration based on equity and the struggle against exclusion in Uruguayan society. School inclusion is thus seen as a strategy that helps promote an inclusive society.

The main proposal of the ITP/PME is to contribute to improving the quality and equity of Uruguayan education. A specific goal is to provide an appropriate and relevant response to the diversity of needs emerging from the students' families and the individual realities which impact teaching practice in classrooms.

The ITP/PME are based on teachers' prior knowledge of the methodology for formulation and management of school projects. Contextualization and decentralization of the pedagogical task are two characteristics that facilitate the gradual process of empowerment in the schools.

When a regular school's classrooms receive children with special educational needs (SEN) and ensure the completion of their schooling and the fullness of their participation, it becomes an Inclusive School. The ITP/PME offer regular schools the

possibility of accessing "special" technical and financial resources that allow them to organize strategies for inclusion.

### WHAT ARE AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL'S VALUES?

- To build a sense of community, promote belonging and participation, and help achieve democracy and citizenship.
- To develop a sense of empathy by teaching that all persons have unique characteristics and abilities.
- To promote the value of diversity by favoring learning skills for living in a community.
- To help recognize that all students have strengths, cultivating self-esteem, and strengthening the sense of self-respect and individuality.
- To use creative ways of dealing with challenges, teaching collective problem-solving and developing teamwork skills.
- To provide all children with stimulating surroundings in which to grow and learn.

## 5. Some examples

Since 2003, Uruguayan School Inclusion Projects have been developed in 125 schools and in 13 Departmental Inspections.

Some of these projects use Inclusive Education funds to pay for architectural changes needed to facilitate access and mobility for children with visual, hearing, or mobility disabilities. Other projects make use of the Inclusive Education component resources to hire specialists and to incorporate innovative practices such as “yoga in schools” (which fosters a climate of friendship and openness).

Still other projects have improved their institutional capacity by training teachers and updating

their libraries and academic resources.

To learn from selected ITP/PMEs examples in Uruguay in 2003-2004, visit:

[http://www.cep.edu.uy/InformacionInstitucional/InspecDivDptos/Deptosyservicios/PME/Inclusion/selccionados\\_2004.htm](http://www.cep.edu.uy/InformacionInstitucional/InspecDivDptos/Deptosyservicios/PME/Inclusion/selccionados_2004.htm)

Access stories written first-hand by teachers and students by visiting Uruguay’s Elementary School Council’s electronic bulletin at:

[http://www.cep.edu.uy/InformacionInstitucional/InspecDivDptos/Deptosyservicios/PME/Inclusion/ultimo\\_boletin.htm](http://www.cep.edu.uy/InformacionInstitucional/InspecDivDptos/Deptosyservicios/PME/Inclusion/ultimo_boletin.htm)

# 5

## OPERATIONAL ASPECTS



## 1. How is an Educational Improvement Project formulated?

The procedures for drafting a proposal for an Educational Improvement Project (PME) can be explained as follows:

- The school's faculty starts with the observation of a current situation within the classroom which is considered unsatisfactory and improvable.
- Having analyzed the situation, the school's staff proposes to search for solutions to what is considered the "main problem" by proposing strategies and actions that focus on an integrated, thematic line.
- A project document is drafted based on the PME Drafting Manual.
- The project's documents are evaluated and selected by an ad hoc committee including school

The forms used by schools to design their Inclusion Projects and Operations Manual and other support material can be obtained at the following internet address:

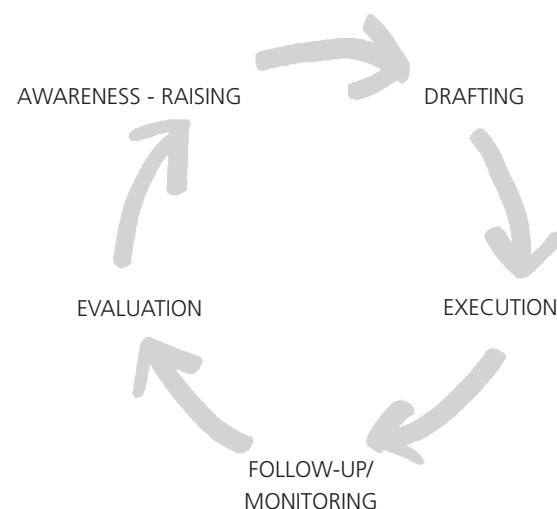
<http://www.cep.edu.uy/InformacionInstitucional/InspeccionDivDptos/Deptosyservicios/PME/Inclusion/documentos.htm>

inspectors, directors of Teacher Training Institutes, and superintendents/principals of so-called Practice Schools (for teachers-in-training).

## 2. From awareness-raising to evaluation: the project cycle

The development of an Educational Improvement Project involves a series of stages aimed at institutional relevance and development of appropriate and useful objectives in light of the priorities of each school and community (relevance). A project cycle thus evolves in which a series of successive stages can be observed:

- **Awareness-raising**, the stage in which it is necessary to encourage and motivate the various players in the school and community to become involved in producing changes in the school.





- **Drafting or formulation**, in which the entire school community is involved in envisaging the project’s achievements and “expected results” based on the identification of a problem situation, target-setting, and development of an action plan.
- **Execution**, consisting of the implementation of the activities planned in the Project.
- **Follow-up and monitoring**, the process of on-going evaluation and verification of the project’s development and results, including adjustments in the original plan.
- **Evaluation**, the process which evaluates learning experiences and provides information for the achievement of goals and objectives that can then serve as input for reopening the project cycle.

### 3. Who participates?

All institutions belonging to public primary education participate in the call for Projects financed by the Inclusive Education strategy:

- Regular Urban Schools
- Special Education Schools
- Rural Schools
- Full-Time Schools
- Practice Schools
- Kindergartens

All schools are invited to draft proposals and apply for the resources available through the Inclusive Education strategy. In order to be selected, the applicant schools (both urban and rural) should have a staff of three or more teachers. Rural schools with only one or two teachers are eligible as are so-called

#### WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES FOR DRAFTING SCHOOL INCLUSION PROJECTS?

- A regular school drafts a School Inclusion project.
- Several regular schools from the same rural area pool together to draft a School Inclusion project.
- A State School Inspection Division drafts a School Inclusion project.

“consolidated school groups”, where up to three schools pool together to develop an Inclusion Project, sharing the technical and financial resources allocated to them.

## 4. How are participating schools selected?

The allocation and distribution of funds for Educational Improvement Projects is based on an open contest in which all public schools in Uruguay are invited to participate. Schools only participate if they are interested in doing so.

The Call for Projects is conducted annually. The projects are evaluated by a designated panel which bases its work on an Evaluation Manual specifically designed for this purpose.

In order to avoid Project selection from pooling in schools with the greatest institutional and project-drafting capacity, the Educational Improvement Projects establish a system of equitable allocation based on socioeconomic characteristics, including a positive discrimination for schools displaying the greatest needs and/or unsatisfactory educational results.

An index based on socioeconomic, institutional-functioning, and results indicators was created to elucidate the project distribution in urban and rural schools. For rural schools, the indicator adopted was the repetition rate. Distribution is as follows:

1. 50% of PME in “high-risk” schools
2. 30% of PME in “medium-risk” schools
3. 20% of PME in “low-risk” schools

This overall strategy led to a distribution of PME with approximately 85% in urban schools – including special schools - and 15% in rural schools with more than one teacher.

## 5. How are the funds calculated?

The financial support for Educational Improvement Projects is provided by the National Department of Public Education through the Project for Quality Improvement in Primary Education (World Bank). As of the year 2003, the MECAEP Project had funded a total of 1,250 Educational Improvement Projects in public schools all over Uruguay.

The amount allocated per project varies from U\$ 1,500 to U\$ 3,000.

The amount of funds that the school receives to develop its Improvement Project is calculated on the basis of the number of students enrolled for the

school year under way at the time the proposal is submitted, applying the following formula:

BASIC AMOUNT  
(same for all schools)  
**U\$ 1,000**

ADDITIONAL AMOUNT  
(proportional to the number of students)  
**U\$ 4.40 X N**  
(where N is the number of students enrolled)

Having signed the institutional agreement, the funds are disbursed in two equal installments.

## 6 What are the benefits received by schools?

The schools selected to develop an IPT/PME receive technical and financial assistance for a period of one year. This assistance is provided gradually over the course of the year in which the Improvement Project is implemented. During the development of the Projects, each school must submit regular progress and accounting reports, as well as a Final Report when the Project is concluded.

### Financial Assistance

The financial assistance covers a series of additional expenditures beyond the school's regular budget, allowing it to make investments and improvements as a function of its Improvement Project objectives.

### Technical Assistance

1. At the beginning of the year, Project Management Advisory Workshops are held with the Principal and Teachers who are named the "Educational Improvement Project Teacher-Coordinators".
2. In the middle of each year, "Learning School" workshops are held with the participation of the teachers and principals of all the schools that are implementing Educational Improvement Projects. These workshops aim to foster a formal space for exchange on the progress and difficulties faced by the Projects, and to share innovative strategies and materials.

3. Many school districts hold Educational Improvement Project exhibits completed by students and teachers in order to publicize progress to the broader community.
4. Monitoring and follow-up of each Improvement Project is done by the State School Inspection Division, specifically by the School Inspector corresponding to the given School, in coordination and collaboration with staff from the PME Department in the Board of Primary Education.

#### THE SCHOOLS RECEIVE

##### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Teacher training
- Follow-up and supervision
- Participation in exchange activities
- Access to national and international networks

##### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- For purchase of educational materials
- For extra expenses linked to project activities
- For minor improvements aimed at removal of architectural barriers and improvement of non-classroom spaces

# 6

## COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES



The schools that implement School Inclusion PME's begin a long process, full of challenges and difficulties, for which they require on-going and follow-up support.

Uruguay has worked to develop a sustainability strategy that promotes mechanisms for cooperation among all those participating in the School Inclusion Project, fostering greater and more efficient utilization of resources, exchange of information, and development of educational networks. This strategy seeks to develop and strengthen some key areas for support and follow-up of work done by Inclusive Schools:

- **Institutional commitment and technical support by the State School Inspection Divisions of the Board of Primary Education.**

- **Conversion of Special Education Schools into Centers for Inclusion Resources.**
- **Mobilization of (and collaboration with) civil society and nongovernmental organizations.**
- **Development of a Network of Inclusive Schools and a virtual community of teachers and students involved in the Project.**
- **Sustained action in advocacy and social communications.**
- **Facilitation of a component involving youth leadership and inclusion.**

## 1 The Role of State School Inspection Divisions

The State School Inspection Divisions<sup>1</sup> can also participate by submitting proposals oriented towards improving school inclusion in their jurisdiction. The Educational Improvement Projects carried out by State School Inspection Divisions were introduced in 2003 and have been receiving highly positive feedback.

The School Inspection Divisions propose an Improvement Project based on the same criteria used for drafting school projects: identify a priority situation or institutional weakness, propose the action strategies to solve it, and draft an annual activities plan. These projects act complementarily by making School Inclusion feasible at the State level and playing a key role in consensus-building and mobilization of regional resources.

The ITP/PMEs headed by the State School Inspection Divisions receive a fixed sum of U\$ 1,000 that generally helps to finance objectives such as community awareness-raising, training of teachers within their jurisdiction, or development of exchange and networking activities among the participating schools.

Examples of recursive ITP/PMEs headed by School Inspection Divisions approved in 2003 included: school district courses, meetings and exchanges between participating schools and teachers, professional symposia to disseminate the theme of inclusion, consultancy for the drafting and management of ITP/PMEs, and networking.

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1 Uruguay is divided into 19 *Departamentos*, the equivalent of States or Provinces.

## 2. The Role of Special Education Schools

The Inclusive Education initiative also allows for the conversion of Special Schools into Resource Centers that provide support to the regular schools and their communities in the inclusion process. Special Education Schools are invited to submit Improvement Projects oriented towards the development of Resource Centers, and if selected, can receive a fixed sum of U\$ 2,000.

The ITP/PMEs headed by the Special Education Schools may include:

- Relocation of students to regular schools
- Dual school programs
- Organization and management of itinerant teachers' services
- Pedagogical research and consultancy
- Multidisciplinary reports and diagnoses
- Collaboration in curricular adjustments
- Monitoring and follow-up of inclusion
- Response to queries and requests by parents
- Technology consultancy to regular schools for the formulation, management, or evaluation of school inclusion projects.

### 3. The Role of Civil Society

The relationship between schools and civil society organizations is not new to Uruguay. Experiences with collaborative activities and civil society organizations date back many years and exhibit a distinct degree of development. Nongovernmental organizations collaborate significantly with schools on projects in such innovative areas as environmental education. This type of relationship provides a wealth of significant experiences that have yet to be fully evaluated, but whose sustained expansion suggests that schools regard them highly.

At the international level, all specialized agencies emphatically recommend that schools promote participation by civil society organizations both in school management issues and in quality improvement and strengthening of the school-community link, recognizing the latter as social capital and considering it an indicator of the quality of social responsibility and citizenship. According to these recommendations, several elements have been proposed regarding the quality of “principles” that develop an effective link between schools and civil society organizations:

#### Definition of adequate and pertinent goals

It is necessary for civil societies’ collaboration to adjust primarily to the school’s needs and priorities and concomitantly to the supply of cooperation.

#### Program monitoring

It is necessary to provide follow-up on the collaborative activity, regularly monitoring and evaluating its quality, feedback, and impact.

#### Sustainability

To the extent that the involvement of civil society organizations in school activity is only possible through volunteer work or the mobilization of additional resources, it is necessary to consider the issue of sustainability and define reachable objectives and results in the short and medium term.

#### Dissemination

It is important to create a “database” that recompiles the available technical, financial, and human resources in nongovernmental organizations.



## 4. Development of a Network of Inclusive Schools

Technological progress in communications opens up new challenges and opportunities for education. The circulation of knowledge, experiences, educational tools, and school support materials is increasingly intense, among other reasons, thanks to the Internet. With the constant growth and progress of connectivity and new communications technologies, the utilization of web-based strategies and online tools increasingly becomes a real alternative for teachers, students, and schools all over the world.

The utilization of network strategies and information and communications technologies to support inclusion projects has valuable antecedents in experiences carried out in the United Kingdom, Spain, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Peru, and elsewhere. The development of these virtual networks and communities has sought to foster, under the premise that interaction among peers enriches the teaching and learning processes, participation by students, their families, and civil society organizations,.

Uruguay has proposed to develop a virtual community that seeks to provide a tool to solve problems of permanent support, time, distance, and resources by joining the Inclusive Schools and all those who participate in the teaching and learning processes.

The cooperative work involving State School Inspection Divisions, Special Schools, and teachers participating in the project through a “Network of Inclusive Schools” allows implementation of the foundations for Inclusive Education as well as providing the instruments and resources produced during projects at the classroom and school levels. The Uruguayan Network of Inclusive Schools points to the provision of the following services:

- Making specialized information available to the schools
- Responding to queries
- Facilitating exchange of experiences
- Orienting information searches through links to specialized sites
- Organizing forums on issues and concerns raised by the participants
- Announcing events (congresses, courses, seminars)
- Sustaining the membership of persons and institutions in a network of inclusion-based practices.

#### SOME SCHOOL INCLUSION NETWORKS AROUND THE WORLD

- Red de Inclusión Educativa de Chile [www.inclusioneducativa.org](http://www.inclusioneducativa.org)
- Inclusion International [www.inclusion-international.org](http://www.inclusion-international.org)
- Inclusion Network [www.inclusion.org](http://www.inclusion.org)
- Centre for Studies on School Inclusion (UK) [www.inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie](http://www.inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie)
- Red de Integración Especial [www.redespecialweb.org/](http://www.redespecialweb.org/)
- The School as a Caring Community in Canada, [www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl](http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl)
- Supporting Individual Educational Needs in the United Kingdom [www.inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/](http://www.inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/)
- Inclusive Education [www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/](http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/)
- Inclusive Education in Europe [www.uva.es/inclusion/](http://www.uva.es/inclusion/)
- Alliance for Inclusive Education in the United Kingdom [www.allfie.org.uk/](http://www.allfie.org.uk/)
- Circle of Inclusion [www.circleofinclusion.org/spanish](http://www.circleofinclusion.org/spanish)
- Red de Discapacidad e Educación Especial [www.especiales.org/](http://www.especiales.org/)
- Inclusión Interamericana. [www.inclusion-international.org/Regions/americas.htm](http://www.inclusion-international.org/Regions/americas.htm)
- Paso a Paso, Venezuela [www.pasoapaso.com.ve](http://www.pasoapaso.com.ve)
- Educación Inclusiva para Niños Ciegos [www.manolo.net](http://www.manolo.net)
- Enabling Education: resources for inclusive education <http://www.eenet.org.uk/>

## 5. Advocacy and Communications Strategies

It is necessary to support the work done by Inclusive Schools through permanent advocacy and dissemination of principles, objectives, and achievements, because the social demand for these kinds of projects is often low, and frequently, the potential benefits are not clearly visible. Sometimes the issue of School Inclusion runs up against established beliefs and social norms, or the erroneous perception that inclusion will demand more resources (both technical and financial) than those available to carry out the proposals.

As a result, advocacy and communications become fundamental tools for support and follow-up to develop and advance Inclusive Education. This means maintaining a sustained strategy in public relations and consensus-building with all the stakeholders: middle-level employees in the State School Inspection Divisions, teachers, families, unions, and NGOs.

In the Uruguayan experience, both communications work and advocacy (through political and institutional support by education professionals and

authorities) have been key factors, ever since it was launched, that level the playing field and seek a positive response to the projects in the schools supporting Inclusive Education.

Advocacy and communications activities seek to achieve four essential objectives: information, motivation, dissemination, and networking.

#### Information: explaining and awareness-raising

It may be the case that the various social actors are aware of the existence of socio-cultural diversity and the right to Education for All, but not everyone feels equally committed to its implications. To inform means to make the issue known and to generate a collective awareness of the rights elucidated by social and economic inclusion.

#### Motivation

Since inclusion represents a new way of conceiving of education, it is important to not assume that everyone will automatically understand this conceptual framework and its implications. To communicate the various dimensions and scopes of an inclusive strategy means to provide backing and commitments to a diverse and inclusive school, and not merely a campaign “to be nicer” to “different” people.

#### Presenting the project

Presenting the project requires making the theme of inclusion known to the various actors in the educational community and related institutions in order to be understood and accepted by the strategy’s various target audiences.

#### Connectivity network

This activity involves collaborating in the development of a connectivity component that integrates

Inclusive Schools, participates in exchanges, and shares educational resources, information and teacher training materials.

The advocacy and communications strategy of the Inclusive Education strategy has targeted a set of actors and sectors in which it has sought to raise awareness and a sense of commitment to act as promoters and key disseminators of inclusion. This task has included all those directly involved in the theme of Educational Inclusion (the educational community, professionals, and related institutions), social leaders, opinion-makers, and the community at large that involve “segmented” actions and messages both within and outside the educational system:

#### Internal Public

- State and national school inspectors
- School superintendents and principals
- Teachers
- Students
- School promotion committees
- Families and the Community

#### External Public

- Social communications media
- Public forming a support network for educational inclusion:
- National agencies (Ministries and Social Action Agencies)
- International Agencies
- Academic Institutions and teacher training institutions
- Civil society organizations (parent associations, NGOs, academic and scientific societies, social and sports clubs, religious institutions)

## Communications pieces developed to date

- PME/ITP logotype
- Poster
- Promotional leaflet on the initiative
- Teachers' support document for "communication with families"
- Teachers' support document for developing an informational leaflet for parents<sup>2</sup>
- Webpage
- Newsletter<sup>3</sup>

## Suggested promotional and communications actions

- Public awards for community members who work to promote inclusion
- Art / music / dance workshops for children in public places
- Inclusion Concert
- Art Exhibit for Inclusion
- Walk for Inclusion
- A star soccer match for inclusion, held in the National Stadium
- Distribution of flyers at stoplights by the children and teachers themselves
- Creation of a song by local musicians
- Reading of stories on inclusion in public places (by writers and academics)
- Posters, flyers, and leaflets in public-use areas (public and private)

## MAIN OBJECTIVES OF ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

- Achieve adherence by key actors (school inspectors, special education administrators and teachers, principals, and teachers) for the project drafting stage.
  - Encourage the development of an inclusive school culture.
  - Position the Educational Improvement Projects for School Inclusion and Transformation of Practices as benchmarks for establishing Inclusive Schools.
  - Make the initiative known to the entire educational community to ensure support and participation.
  - Raise overall public awareness concerning the issue of social inclusion in order to commit stakeholders to the implementation of the necessary changes.
- 
- Painting of murals in schools (paint donated by a private sponsor, with collaboration by volunteer artists)
  - Inclusion workshops for parents in schools (led by people from the support network)
  - Painting contest among schoolchildren to be used in an almanac

2 It was considered more appropriate for each school to be able to develop its own "tailor-made" leaflet rather than having a single leaflet. A support document for teachers was developed for this purpose.

3 A monthly newsletter targeting teachers, educational institutions, and families.

## 6. The role of schoolchildren as agents for inclusion

In the final analysis, the future of every school inclusion strategy depends on schoolchildren and teachers making the objectives and strategies their own. It is necessary for the principles of inclusion and diversity to succeed in permeating both the class and recess.

During 2004, Uruguay has carried out a pilot experiment seeking to develop a child leadership component in the School Inclusion initiative.

These “inclusive leadership” training and empowerment activities with boys and girls participating in the ITP/PMEs have attempted to:

- Record the living dimension of the experience of children participating in the Project for Inclusion and Transformation of Practices in a group of schools.
- Investigate in a pilot mode a methodology to strengthen the leadership and participation of children who can act as agents for school inclusion.
- Examine the perceptions of children concerning the inclusion process and share a first analysis of the initiative’s principal barriers, strengths, and weaknesses.

4 regular schools are currently participating in School Inclusion Educational Improvement Projects. The schools invited to participate in the Projects showed a strong component of schoolchildren’s participation in achieving the objectives of inclusion.

The selected schools were:

In Montevideo

- School No. 38, classified as a regular urban school with an inclusive modality that has stu-

dents with special educational needs based on visual disabilities.

- School No. 336, with a critical socio-cultural context.

In Las Piedras

- School No. 226, classified as a Practice School with an integration modality, has students with special educational needs based on hearing disabilities.
- School No. 149, a regular urban school.

In each school the activity involved fourth- and fifth-grade children. The sample population was chosen on the basis of strengthening each institution to multiply the experience. The groups had diverse characteristics in terms of their social situations and cognitive skills. They were chosen at random, without explicitly seeking students with special educational needs.

The exchange activity group included a total of 63 children selected by their own peers.

In a first stage (preparation, sensitization, warm-up), the team of educators and specialists heading the project visited the selected schools and carried out the preparatory activities in a meeting among the schools. These activities focused on play by:

- exploring game dynamics in relation to the issue of inclusion (participation, leadership, segregation, resistance);
- laying the foundations for the preparation of a “project task” to be developed by the boys and girls with the objective of raising their awareness and providing continuity for this first activ-

ity, while preparing groundwork for the second activity; and

- identifying the boys and girls most sensitized to the issue of inclusion.

Subsequently, an exchange meeting was held among the schoolchildren from participating schools, seeking to take a first step towards the integration of a network of children committed to the principles of inclusion. It is expected that in the future they will be able to replicate in their own schools the activities they experienced in this exchange. Such a process serves as a way of facilitating feedback and dissemination of the learning process, while practicing modalities of leadership and participation.

#### TRAITS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN THAT ACT AS AGENTS FOR INCLUSION

- Attuned to cooperative group work.
- Ability to engage in dialogue with peers.
- Willingness to organize themselves and others for the group task.
- Positive attitude towards the task.
- Know how to clarify and precisely describe ideas and feelings.
- Ability to sum up the key points in the inclusive message.
- Ability to show empathy.

# 7

## ALTERNATIVES AND CHALLENGES



## 1. Certification of included schoolchildren

The certification of children attending inclusive schools is still one of the main administrative, legal, and qualitative challenges. How has this issue been dealt with in the Uruguayan experience?

Traditionally, upon completion of their course of study, students attending Special Schools in Uruguay have received a certificate which enables them to continue studying; in night schools, courses in the National Plenary for People with Disabilities, and through the (scarce) vacancies offered at the *Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay* (Work University). The latter has consolidated and expanded its number of included students, depending on the willingness of the various departments to become “inclusive centers”. The enactment of new legislation in 1989<sup>1</sup> established the principle of “equalization of opportunities” and launched the process of approval of standards in Secondary Education to allow the effective inclusion of students with different abilities.

Awareness-raising in society and expansion of the inclusion policy have made it necessary to rethink the types of support provided to teachers and students that guarantee quality and equity in the schoolchildren’s mandatory course of study. Inclusion projects have demarcated a “before and after” stage in the inclusion process and become a key factor for establishing standards and guaranteeing the students’ completion of the full course of mandatory schooling. This means that for every included student in the regular school system, a curriculum will be developed that is adapted to his

Just as the curriculum must adapt, grading and evaluation must also be made flexible, assessing the students’ achievements based on individual characteristics, pace, and learning style. A personalized curricular proposal and flexible evaluation will allow the student to move through the various stages in the mandatory course of study. Certification is provided through a document that reflects the level of competence achieved by the student.

or her possibilities. In addition, it is necessary to sign inter-institutional agreements that guarantee an inclusive setting and support network and allow access to the curriculum.

Some strategies for certification of included students

- **Incorporate a “Student’s Portfolio” from Primary Education through the third year of Secondary Education**

This portfolio records basic information on the child (report cards, technical reports, records of outstanding moments in the process) in order for teachers to be able to accommodate the curriculum and adapt it to the student’s educational possibilities.

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1 Act 16.095 “Comprehensive Protection for Persons with Disabilities”



## 2. Guide the transformation of Special Schools into Resource Centers for Inclusive Education

Although it is important that special education schools comply voluntarily with the inclusive education focus and generate their own strategies to transform themselves into resource centers, this process must be spearheaded and guided by clear policies that stimulate changes and present tangible tools to favor inclusive education.

The Inclusive School strategy can and should put economic incentives and institutional policies in motion that can overcome the logical resistances to change. This can be accomplished in part by presenting concrete alternatives for transformation and by spreading awareness of the most successful experiences.

## 3. Address the socio-cultural dimension of inclusion

Any strategy for School Inclusion is ultimately a strategy for social inclusion. That is why the existing barriers in the socio-cultural dimension of the inclusion process should be taken into account and dealt with. We can list some of the barriers that have been more evident in the Uruguayan experience:

- Attitudes of parents:
  - resistance to change, both for the children already attending the schools and those seeking to be included;
  - fear of having less individual support available; and
  - fear of losing special benefits;
- A strong “culture of homogeneity”:
  - It is felt that children with special educational needs will achieve worse results in regular schools.

- It is believed that the presence of children with special educational needs in regular classrooms will delay the learning process for the entire group.

Removing these barriers is a long process, since it requires behavioral changes. Along the way, there are some guidelines that can orient the process and help everyone overcome the barriers to inclusion:

- Get families involved.
- Open the schools to the community and civil society organizations.
- Strengthen networks and alliances between the school and the community.
- Work together with the Special Schools to narrow the gap between regular education and special education.

## 4. Developing Mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation

A tool is being developed to evaluate the inclusion of PME's and Practice Transfers. It works to enrich the teaching/learning process and provide schools with a flexible plan that meets the diversity of demands by its students.

This is a timely moment to conceptualize the framework of the term evaluation as “the continuous ordered and systematic process of tapping qualitative and quantitative information that responds to certain requirements - validity, dependence, responsibility, utility, precision, viability - obtained through diverse techniques and instruments that, after being compared with established criteria, allow us to issue value judgments aimed at facilitating decision-making related to the object of evaluation.” (Torres, Gonzales, 2004).

Therefore, the educational thrust of evaluation is not limited to specific moments outside the educational process but is developed parallel to and integrated within it. The evaluation process must thus be developed in a continuous and personalized way, with student education and the teaching processes as its goals.

The first evaluation undertaken thus far by the School Inclusion Projects in Uruguay therefore involves an analysis of the implementation of some of its basic items<sup>2</sup>:

1. Changes in institutional culture.
2. Modifications in pedagogic and teaching practices.
3. Teacher's attitudinal changes towards collaborative work.

4. Family intervention in the process of inclusive education.
5. Relationships with institutions servicing the community.
6. Real and active participation by students.
7. Benefits obtained by (all) students.
8. Educational continuity (adherence to the regulations on mandatory attendance until completion of the first section of middle school, equivalent to junior high school).

The analysis of these factors involves a “rearrangement” (Enguita, 2001) of school organization, including such diverse dimensions as:

- a) different utilization of times in the school calendar;
- b) involvement in problems and opportunities that “exceed” the limits of the classroom group; and
- c) an active and harmonious relationship with the community-sustained process of innovation in teaching strategies that encourages reflection and guides the school towards an institutional model.

### 4.1 Changes in Institutional Culture

The changes to be detected in the institutional culture presuppose an interaction where different people have entered into communication and achieved understanding in all areas: affective, ethical, and cognitive. An inclusive institutional culture should pro-

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2 This considers the proposals drafted by a team designated by the Uruguayan C.E.P. (Board of Primary Education).

mote learning models in which each student contributes his or her own culture. This can mean using individual skills and ways of learning and comprehending to achieve greater self-reliance on those skills and scholastic improvements.

The inclusive school culture should be seen as a space that recreates cultural life for the students, rebuilding knowledge, feelings, and behaviors, in a conscious and autonomous way.

It is thus necessary to develop communicative skills based on cooperative and inclusive dynamics. These approaches, specifically including those dealing with families belonging to minority, poor, or non-academic cultures, offer a suitable framework to overcome exclusion.

A diversity paradigm in education implies agreeing that every educational organization should be shaped around a community in which students, teachers, and parents are integrated. All members of educational communities tend to come from different cultures, present different needs, or simply have different concepts towards education, including interests, rhythms, learning styles, motivations, and expectations. Some indicators that represent the process of development of communicative skills driving change in institutional culture are:

- collaboration among teachers
- collaboration between teachers and administrators
- horizontal communication
- family participation in the school environment, including the classroom
- teacher and community participation in school management
- community involvement by teachers
- parents' perception of the school as an institution
- use of community resources
- spaces created for reflection by families with school center personnel

## 1.2 Changes in Pedagogical and Didactic Practices

Dealing with each student's needs requires designing and adapting the curriculum and teachers' methodology in an individualized way, integrating both the culture and characteristics of each student in more enriched and diverse ways. It demands a commitment to an interdisciplinary and creative vision of good teaching practices. This commitment includes both self-knowledge of teaching strategies which favor each student and allowing for group reflection on the best procedures to teach diversity. Curricular adaptation implies rethinking contents in at least three different levels of adequacy so that all students can do their schoolwork according to their strategies and knowledge. Students thus feel encouraged because they all have a purpose and the teacher is familiar with their specific ways of learning.

Working from this perspective also requires examining the classrooms, schoolwork, and curriculum through the prism cultural content. It means achieving group relationships between areas of knowledge based primarily on aspects of everyday life. This view establishes intellectual habits that force one to take into consideration the human interactions from as many viewpoints and perspectives as possible. It is necessary to use curricular adaptations as an opportunity to diversify educational proceedings and to attend to individual differences. Some relevant indicators will thus be considered:

- Teaching resources
- Curricular adequacy vis-à-vis the teacher
- Individualized work
- Selection of interdisciplinary contents
- Quantity and destination of teaching alternatives

### 1.3 Teachers Attitudinal Changes towards Collaborative Work

To achieve the levels of interdisciplinary curricula, schools should promote collaborative work among teachers to reflect on the development of aptitudes between all grades. A broader vision of what takes place in each classroom can thus be achieved and the subject content will serve as an axis balancing individual needs with elementary dimensions from the educational system. This implies access to other phases of the school system.

Attention to diversity generates challenges and uncertainties which lead to the promotion of creativity and innovation, thereby strengthening the schools. This could be evaluated by using:

- Times and spaces for teachers' reflection and coordination
- Expectations of achievement regarding teachers' tasks
- Expectations of achievement regarding learners' tasks
- Spaces for communication and reflection for students (forums, assemblies, etc.)

### 1.4 Family Intervention in Inclusive Education Processes

Family intervention in pursuit of an Inclusive Education process implies both achieving a good relationship with the environment and an opportunity for improving coordination of diverse services that require children's attention. The idea is to strengthen the feeling of belonging and promote a school space in which all feel secure and where the family also has its place. Families' fundamental expectations and views about schools must thus be considered.

Inclusive schools tend toward the *learning community* model, affirming that everyone can participate and contribute to the educational dynamics. Classroom participation and intervention by other

educational agents (parents, grandparents, etc.) improves the perception of learning and lessons. Coordinated action by these agents in the classroom environment with their different cultures, knowledge, and viewpoints, determines the degree of community involvement in the school.

It is thus important to encourage the following:

- Relationships between classes and families
- Attention to parents' expectations
- Families' participation in the learning process within the classroom
- Institutional regulations regarding the parent/school interface

### 1.5 Relationship with the community

Overcoming social exclusion requires introducing agents and institutions from all areas. If other actors and sectors are involved, they will share with the school the overall goal of inclusion, participating in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school projects. All sectors of the community can participate by contributing their ideas, sharing projects, and promoting inclusive learning models.

The degree of participation in school management, as well as the links that are established with various social organizations, both formal and informal, will determine the degree of progress a school makes towards greater involvement in the environment and the knowledge and services available there.

Possible indicators will be:

- Coordinating with other educational institutions
- Networking with other community organizations

### 4.6 Student Participation

Students' active participation should include spaces where they feel stimulated to question the knowledge, activities, and behaviors of those with whom

they share everyday life. For all students to participate in this process it is necessary to implement flexible groups in spaces which often extend outside the classroom, organized according to different domains and the potential for learning rather than the school's grading system.

Forming groups according to levels of reading comprehension (rethinking the separation by grades) fosters cooperative participation and integration of all teachers and students, favoring the teaching process according to diversity in learning.

Group work enhances dexterity and negotiation skills that are part of the indispensable communications skills for autonomy. Teachers assume a *facilitating* and supporting role towards the students through cooperative learning, using various strategies. Tasks seek to create and support interdependence among group members, which is the essence of collaboration.

Working in different group dynamics, such as class assemblies, forums, etc., where students feel their opinions are heard and taken into account, strengthens communication and interpersonal ties. Flexible and open curriculum proposals reinforce the possibilities for students to choose, introduce changes, and focus their attention. This has organizational implications both inside and outside the classroom for cooperative and flexible spaces. The interdependence that this process intends to strengthen increases when the students are responsible for the processes and group products in which they participate.

To assess the impact of work under this modality, the following indicators are considered:

- Classroom organization for group tasks
- Grouping criteria
- Task assignment
- Mediation of output differences and group participation
- Institutional support for group work

#### 4.6 Benefits Obtained by All Students

The educational sense of a diversity-friendly activity or strategy depends less on technical components and more on the values and meanings acquired in an organizational context. The benefits of inclusion are read tacitly through all components of the school and acquire strength as they grow.

Some indicators of these benefits are:

- Underlying values and conceptions in the school culture
- Meaning and intentionality ascribed by teachers to inclusive activities
- Degrees of participation and agreement from the students
- Group quality in line with individual benefits

#### 4.8 Educational Continuity

The lessons learned from an inclusive educational approach allow students to achieve successive goals within the school system and to maintain continuity in the formal subsystems. A school characterized by a comprehensive and diversified work model should also find points of equilibrium with regular education, guaranteeing that students be able to meet mandatory educational requirements by the end of the first section of middle school (junior high school). Integrating this model with other subsystems poses a real challenge. Thus, mechanisms are still needed to articulate and involve all the subsystems, in order for solutions to be found to the problems arising in each of them.

#### D) SCHOOL N° 2

In the year 2003, some 35 proposals submitted by schools from all over Uruguay were selected to develop Improvement Projects with a focus on School Inclusion, receiving resources from the Inclusive Education initiative ranging from U\$ 2,000 to U\$ 3,000 each. One of them, School No. 2 in Colonia, has been working since then on an innovative strategy that seeks to fully transform the school's work, making it more inclusive and open to diversity. The school has a total enrollment of 335 children and in the first year achieved the permanent inclusion of 2 girls with hearing disabilities, while 7 other boys and 5 girls are being integrated and participate in the majority of the school's activities and spaces.

*"Our Educational Improvement Project for Inclusion and Transformation of Practices is interweaving the work that the school had already been developing for several years in terms of citizenship training. We seek to foster a greater sense of social responsibility and a greater commitment by the children to the city and all its inhabitants,"* reports School Principal Sandra García.

*"For many years the school had a classroom that we referred to as "speech therapy", attended by children with hearing disabilities. However, these children were not even integrated into the school's life, there were a lot of conflicts, and we realized we weren't handling all the codes needed for communicating well. We therefore proposed that the entire school (students, teachers, and administrative staff) learn sign language. We thus think that the project will benefit the entire student body, not only the children with difficulties. The interest also grew*

*spontaneously among all the schoolchildren, and they themselves began to ask to learn sign language."*

The school has highlighted the commitment and motivation among teachers and administrative staff, who have found this experience to be a refreshing and gratifying educational "adventure". The ITP/PME has provided training for the school staff to deal with special needs. It has also allowed for the purchase of educational materials and organization of activities that are open to families and the community.

In the subsequent months there have been significant improvements in overall school performance. *"The opportunity to learn and use sign language has been a highly enriching experience for everyone. We have seen the progress both in the acquisition of reading and writing and improvements in the possibilities for symbolic and body expression. We see the contribution by the inclusion focus to the school's overall project and to the development of values by children, whose ability to communicate opens them to others to whom they would not previously have related."*

The challenge now is to consolidate and systematize the experience, strengthening its visibility and impact on the community. For this purpose, an agreement is being organized between the school and the Uruguayan Association for the Deaf, which has offered to provide a permanent instructor in sign language which will reinforce the teaching and foster follow-up of the educational project by a civil society.



## ATTACHMENT I

# Organization of the Uruguayan Educational System

In Uruguay, mandatory education includes two years of preschool and nine years of basic education: six years of Primary School (1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades) and three years of the Basic Middle School Series (1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> years), provided in lyceums and technical schools with the same curriculum. From the administrative point of view, primary schools depend

on the Board of Primary Education, the lyceums on the Board of Secondary Schooling, and the technical schools on the Board of Technical and Vocational Education, which are in turn decentralized bodies of the National Department of Public Education (ANEP), an autonomous institution governing pre-primary, primary, and middle-level public education.

PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STRUCTURE IN URUGUAY			
LEVEL	AGE	GRADES	TYPE
Initial or Pre-primary Education	4-5 years		Mandatory
Primary Education	6-11 years	1st through 6 <sup>th</sup> grades	
First Series of Middle School ( <i>Ciclo Básico</i> , or CB)	12-14 years	1 <sup>st</sup> through 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	
Second Series of Middle School ( <i>Bachilleratos</i> )	15-17 years	4 <sup>th</sup> through 6 <sup>th</sup> years	Non-mandatory



## ATTACHMENT II

# Stages in the Social Communications Strategy

STAGES 1: INITIAL STEPS	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSALS
"School Inclusion" Project submitted in various formats.	<p>Logotype design</p> <p>Design and production of poster and leaflet.</p> <p>Design of manual.</p> <p>Design of website content structure.</p> <p>Design of newsletter content structure.</p> <p>Design of document for joining the project (Support Network).</p>

STAGE 2: LAUNCHING / INTERNAL PUBLIC	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSALS
Educational community informed of the initiative.	<p>Informational leaflet.</p> <p>Personal letter.</p> <p>Presentation of the initiative by the inspectors.</p>
Educational community motivated for project participation and development.	<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Build a database of the resources available in various support formats (bibliography, web pages, audio cassettes, audiovisuals, etc.).</p> <p>Newsletter.</p> <p>TRAINING:</p> <p>Facilitate participation by teachers and principals in workshops, courses, seminars, and conferences on the theme of educational inclusion.</p> <p>CONNECTIVITY:</p> <p>Present the project on the Internet (<a href="http://www.anep.edu.uy">www.anep.edu.uy</a>).</p> <p>Facilitate other communications channels with the project: bulletin boards, fax, telephone, mail.</p> <p>Exchange of experiences with principals and teachers from inclusive schools.</p>

STAGE 2: LAUNCHING / EXTERNAL PUBLIC	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSALS
Support network formed.	<p>Present the Project to institutions that are outstanding in their support to the community in order to involve them and empower the project. Official letter of introduction, MECAEP/CEP.</p> <p>Present the Project to all the professionals and institutions involved in the education of children and adolescents. Official letter, MECAEP/CEP.</p> <p>Issue invitations that imply a commitment to the initiative by signing a symbolic network membership document.</p> <p>Invite members to participate and engage in exchange, providing details on the project's communications mechanisms.</p> <p>Present the project's webpage and establish links to the pages of the network's members.</p> <p>Organize a seminar for exchange among the institutions and professionals belonging to the network and project.</p> <p>Consolidate a database of the network members to send the electronic newsletter.</p>

STAGE 3: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT / INTERNAL PUBLIC	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSALS
Public School principals and teachers motivated.	<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Update the database of available resources (in different support formats).</p> <p>Continue the newsletter.</p>
	<p>TRAINING:</p> <p>Facilitate participation by teachers and principals in workshops, courses, seminars, and conferences related to the theme of educational inclusion.</p>
	<p>VISIBILITY:</p> <p>Develop a strong presence for the project inside the schools: posters, leaflets, and bulletin board announcements.</p>
	<p>CONNECTIVITY:</p> <p>Promote the use of the project's webpage.</p> <p>Exchange of experiences and resources.</p> <p>Promote the development of shared projects between various schools.</p> <p>Foster the development of an electronic group (chat) of teachers.</p>
The promotional committee in each school evaluates the benefits of an Educational Improvement Project.	<p>Prepare informational materials for families.</p> <p>Develop an outstanding presence for the projects inside the schools: posters, leaflets, and announcements on bulletin boards.</p> <p>Promote the use of the project's webpage.</p>

STAGE 3: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT / EXTERNAL	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSALS
Support network consolidated.	Promote participation and exchange through a discussion forum (chat) on the webpage. Make room for innovations and proposals that favor the project's objectives.
Public opinion aware of the rights of persons with different abilities.	Generate stories and interviews in the mainstream news programs in Montevideo and the interior of Uruguay to provide more in-depth information.
Attitudes to support social inclusion achieved.	Distribute leaflets, posters, and stickers to the institutions and business centers where large numbers of people circulate.
National coverage obtained.	Programmed press campaign. Dissemination of the project's webpage.

