



# International perspectives on support and inclusion for students with dyslexia and special educational needs

**eda** european dyslexia association  
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## Experiences

Background as teacher & special educational needs teacher  
Researcher and Professor at dpt. of Special Education at  
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Research topics: socio-emotional climate of learning  
environments; educational values; mental health and  
wellbeing; early interventions in early childhood education  
and care; international comparative studies; policy analysis

# Contents

- Shortcomings in special educational needs provisions - in the Swedish context
- Outlook at other educational systems
- Comparisons, good models and obstacles
- Possible interventions and changes



# Shortcomings in special educational support



- *Precise data is lacking – why?  
we have indications from....*
- Evaluations from School Inspectorate (35% have [issues](#))
- Several qualitative studies and follow-up
- Large decline in literacy in international evaluations
- 2015 OECD [report](#) on the Swedish system
- Statements from parents: the children struggle, they are not fluent reader, and yet they do not get effective special educational support



## OECD analysis

- Quality and equity across the schools
- High-quality teaching profession
- Steer policy and accountability focused on improvements

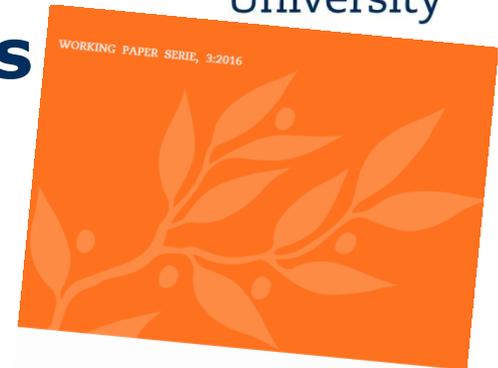
# About the Swedish School Commission - a governmental inquiry



Sweden is committed to a school system that promotes development and learning for all students. However, student performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has declined dramatically, from near the OECD average in 2000 to significantly below the average in 2012. These disappointing results have fueled a national debate on the quality of school education, leading to a broad consensus on the need for change. The recommendations of the OECD report focus on three priorities: conditions that promote quality and equity across Swedish schools, a long-term human resource strategy to build capacity for improved teaching and learning, and strengthened policy steering and accountability with a focus on improvement. The School Commission will submit proposals aimed at improving learning outcomes, teaching and equity in Swedish schools. To respond to current challenges, Sweden needs to implement a comprehensive education reform to bring about system-wide change and strengthen the performance of all Swedish schools and students. Based on the OECD's recommendations, previous inquiries and research, the School Commission has defined certain areas as critical for improving the quality in the Swedish school system. One such area is to ensure teaching and learning approaches that respond to diverse student learning needs, and consolidate support to disadvantaged groups.

# Outlook at educational systems that seem to work better

- Aim: to identify organisational models
- Task from the School Commission 2015-2016
- 10 students in master programme  
Albinsson, Back, Björk, Bushby, Jacobsson, Lantz, & Hallberg, Klemets, Skoglöw, Strömbäck
- Multiple case studies with following comparative analysis
- Common methodology



Särskilt stöd i den svenska skolan  
och internationellt  
- en jämförande analys av policy och praktik för  
specialpedagogiska insatser och särskilt stöd  
Mara Westling Allodi



Kartläggning av särskilt  
stöd och tidiga insatser

Fallstudier av internationella utbildningssystem

Malin Albinsson, Marie Back, Marie Björk, Thomas Bushby,  
Charlotte Jacobsson, Maria Lantz & Linda Hallberg, Anna Klemets,  
Christin Skoglöw och Annette Strömbäck

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# Special educational provisions adaptations and supports

- Elements in the educational system
- Devices in a context, not alone
- Special educational needs provisions can not fix all issues, as some depend on other causes
- They are influenced by visions, goals, concepts, laws organization; funding; staffing resources; professional development; links between research and practice; evaluations
- Anyway: effective provisions and interventions should be offered and at the right time, without delays

# Selection of systems

- New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, North Carolina,
- West Australia, New South Wales,  
Ontario Canada, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands

## Methodology:

Mapping of Policy, Human resources; evaluations;  
examples

## What favourable features were identified?

- Inclusiveness of general goals
- Special educational needs and provisions are regulated, visible, foreseen and evaluated
- Inclusiveness in curricula
- Early interventions occur
- Knowledge from research and practice are integrated



## Features in educational systems

- Integration of goals for achievement, equity and well-being
- Goals and objectives: if you do not evaluate some of them they are forgotten
- Successful systems make it visible /evaluate how the system functions for risk groups students
- A range of goals are evaluated at school and national level: equity -wellbeing- achievement, for various groups, not only average results

## Visibility and consistent rules about special educational provisions

- Needs
- Resources
- Interventions and methods

Statistics, collection of data, definition of provisions, selection of a number of effective programs to choose within, professional requirements, accessible information about effective and recommended guidelines and measures that you are expected to follow : Ontarios What works? [serie](#)



# Curriculum recognizes the variation among students

- Curriculum that are possible to differentiate
- Provide clear advice to teachers' adaptations
- No boundaries between school types
- Continuity and collaboration at transitions
- *Descriptions and example of performances* (standards) provide support to teachers' assessments so that they can plan appropriate activities that build on achieved competence- avoid stagnation

# Support as a right and early interventions

- Rights and individual educational plan
- Early interventions in early school years prevent difficulties and are effective
- Parents are involved participants

## "Risk" behaviours

- Unclear adaptations and interventions
- Regulation changes and copious models in decentralized systems
- Unwillingness to identify students with special educational needs

# Righteous, equitable funding

- Compensatory funding related to needs
- Equal resource allocation may make the students that require more resources to be not welcome

## Risk and consequences

- A system without compensatory mechanism generates incitements to wait with provisions
- Specialized and segregated groups may look like a rational solution

# Evaluations, research and development of practices



- Strong links between education and applied research
- Follow-up of prioritized student groups
- Development of expertise, trials, evidence building



# The Special Educational field in the Swedish context

- Tradition of criticism and self-criticism
- Negative attitudes in the educational field
- For many people the identification of special educational needs: something bad, wrong, leading to categorizing
- "*Good intentions*" to avoid categorizing and avoid looking at the child as problem carrier, may lead to not identifying and not giving provisions
- An inclusive education cannot build on a systematic ignoring of individual needs, on the contrary they have to be recognized

# Reading and writing in the Swedish context

- Extreme decentralization since the 90'
- Interventions and programs are vaguely formulated
- Special educational practices can not develop when we do not know what happens: needs, resources, activities, costs, results
- Evidence from research is not necessarily used [SBU](#) [VR](#)
- Ongoing controversy and fights among researchers and teachers about early literacy, reading and writing

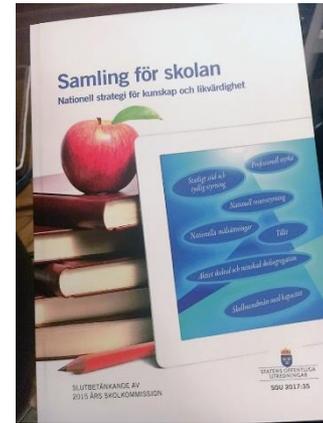
## Suggestions and proposal

- Goals and curriculum that recognize variation
- Visibility and data collection: mapping and evaluations
- Early intervention and support at transitions
- Compensatory resource allocation, equity
- Program and methods that are recommended are adopted in the practices
- Applied educational science is developed
- Links between teacher education- research and practice: Research alone is not enough if the results are not implemented in practices

## A more inclusive educational system

It requires

- good educational practices
- acknowledgment of students' various needs
- early and preventive interventions
- adequate forms of support
- acceptance of special educational needs knowledge in the broad educational field



## National strategy from the School Commission

*School Commission SOU 2017: 35 [report](#) was presented in April 2017 and the suggestions are presently evaluated. Some reforms have been introduced, for instance on additional national funding based on socio-economic indicators of needs, 150 million EURO during 2018 -but more changes have to come in order to bring real changes*

# References

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