CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE FUTURES
POLICY, ORGANISATION & COMMUNITY ACTION LEARNING

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ADVANCING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

Notes on a journey in Latin America, October/November 2018

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Introduction

Across many countries of the world great efforts are being made to advance *inclusive education*. Most simply this means: creating learning environments which maximise the potential for every young person in our diverse societies to receive high quality education alongside their peers in local schools that serve the whole community.

Globally, inclusive schooling has been recognised as the optimum way forward for education for more than 30 years but this vision was given new momentum by the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (especially Article 24) and more recently, by the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 4). Many governments have signed up to these intentions. More locally, family and other civil society associations have been active campaigners for educational reform to benefit all children (1). Many good schools, good teachers and indeed their students have been trying to deliver inclusion in everyday practice.

All this is true in Latin America. Over a month in the latter part of 2018, we had the privilege of travelling together through four countries - Mexico (Mexico City and Puebla), Colombia (Bogotá, Bucaramanga and Paipa), Peru (Lima and Arequipa) and Bolivia (La Paz and Cochabamba) - to learn more about current progress (2). Stephanía is a school-teacher in Bucaramanga. She is also bilingual (Spanish/English). Her own school is considering how best to improve its practice for all students and gave her the time to join this exploration. David is Director of the London-based Centre for Inclusive Futures whose mission is to help build sustainable communities which value all their members as equal citizens. For the last twelve years he has had the opportunity for six weeks each year to work with people in Latin America who share this mission.

In each country, we were the guests of campaigning civil society associations and other NGOs: *Puebla para todos* in Mexico, *Asdown* Colombia and the Autonomous University of Bucaramanga (UNAB), *Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome Down (*SPSD) and *Equipo 21*, and *Programa Mundo Inclusivo* (PMI) in Bolivia. As we shall explain later, our work in Mexico was a little different, but in the other three countries our hosts' main focus is on the inclusion of disabled people and each organised a programme for us to meet students and families, visit schools, talk with school principals, engage government officials and meet leaders of their associations so as to understand their strategies for educational transformation.

As our photos convey best, we were very fortunate to meet many inspiring people making impressive efforts to advance inclusive schooling, often in challenging circumstances.

We thank them all most sincerely.

Our Approach

Over the four weeks of our journey, we met nearly two hundred people, some individually, some in particular groups (e.g. family associations) and some in mixed groups of stakeholders working together for positive change. Some of these were involved in what we can describe as creating the *climate* for inclusive schooling e.g. through legislative changes, public investment, teacher training and efforts to inform public opinion. Many more were involved in promoting *inclusive school development* so as to welcome more diversity into the classroom and ensure that all students are participating and learning. As we say above, our overarching interest was in understanding better how civil society associations and alliances are playing their part in advancing inclusive schooling in these different national contexts. Stephanía is producing a complementary video sharing more images from our journey and offering her reflections on the implications of what we saw for teachers.

Our approach was straight-forward. Essentially we facilitated and participated in a 'rolling conversation' with the people we met in each country, seeking to understand how they define inclusive schooling, what they are doing to widen participation in quality education, what they think is working, what is not working and what lessons they are drawing for doing better.

We tried to join each conversation with open minds and open hearts, listening carefully to everyone's experience, not least the young people. But our minds were not blank. We are committed to the human rights approach to education set out in the UNCRPD: all young people have the same right to quality education. We believe that in diverse classrooms, students have similar educational needs and children learn better together. We think that the UNESCO/IBE Resource Pack *Reaching Out To All Learners* (3) offers a very useful framework for reflecting on the *process* of educational transformation at the interconnected levels of government, school and classroom - although we also think that

international resources like these need to be sensitive to different local contexts and cultures. And we had in mind the concrete experience of the Canadian province of New Brunswick, an early pioneer in developing fully inclusive education systems (4).

In each country we ended our visit by meeting our hosts and sometimes their allies. We shared our specific observations and continued our conversation about civil society strategies for educational change and implications for government.

In this pamphlet we look across what we learnt from the three countries to draw out some general reflections on strategy and describe some initiatives which impressed us. We offer these reflections not as 'conclusions' but rather as a resource to the work which national and local leaders are always doing to learn from their own experience so as to do better in their situations.

Advancing Inclusive Schooling: Twelve Key Lessons

The countries we visited are highly diverse in their social composition. Moreover this diversity typically reflects a long history of social division, discrimination and exclusion. Indigenous communities that have been the victims of centuries of oppression. The descendants of Africans who came as slaves. Gender discrimination. Prejudice against and low expectations among disabled people. Major gaps between urban and rural lifestyles. Massive and continuing economic inequalities and the reflection of these in differentiated public and private systems of schooling.

Schools are, of course, part of these societies but in pursuing inclusive policies, cultures and practices they can develop themselves as small communities which welcome such diversity and increasingly reach out to all learners.

This is a huge challenge. It requires the active participation of government, educational institutions (including, of course teachers and other professions) and civil society. It needs positive action at all levels from the Education Ministry to children and their families. And it requires sustained efforts at all these levels over many years.

In the three countries, we were privileged to see great examples of these efforts and learn from many inspiring and committed people. Reflecting on these examples, we have identified twelve key lessons for achieving sustained progress towards inclusive schooling, focusing - like our hosts - particularly on the inclusion of disabled children and young people alongside their peers. In calling them *keys* we have in mind ways of unlocking the many barriers to progress. In identifying twelve, we are drawing attention to the inter-connected challenges involved in educational system transformation.

We offer these twelve keys as a framework for government, civil society associations and schools to review progress in their own journeys towards inclusive schooling and identify ways of doing better.

Twelve key lessons in strategies for advancing inclusive schooling

> **1.** *Sustained transformation of education - at the level of the whole system and at the level of the school - requires a coherent vision of inclusive schooling to drive a wide range of positive actions.*
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> **2.** *Advancing inclusive schooling is a continuous process of reviewing progress against this vision and strengthening the capacity of both the education system and individual schools to be successful with all students: this process requires a strong commitment to learning from experience.*
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> **3.** *Transformation in traditional forms of education requires creative and resilient leadership which simultaneously articulates the vision, engages and builds support from a wide range of interests and encourages this continuing process of open and self-critical reflection.*
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> **4.** *To achieve national transformation, government action is required not just on law and policy but also in providing strategic leadership which fully articulates a new vision of education based on valuing diversity and mobilises the interconnected elements of 'whole system' change.*

> 5. *Family associations have a critical role as partners with the education system at all levels in advancing the journey to inclusive schooling. They too need to think strategically about how best to use the modest resources of their membership to maximise positive impact.*
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> 6. *Transformational change is most dependent on developing the capacities of teachers and other practitioners to think and act differently. This requires significant reform of basic professional education in the Universities and other training institutions; it also requires greatly strengthened opportunities for continuing professional development within the schools.*
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> 7. *Individual schools need to be a prime focus for efforts to achieve educational transformation. Sustainable transformation requires in turn that schools become small learning communities, reflecting deeply on their experiences so as to shape their own journey to inclusive schooling.*
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> 8. *Most planned learning takes place in classrooms: teachers need the support, confidence and skills to manage their classrooms and plan their lessons so that all students are participating and learning.*
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> 9. *Expert support to schools needs to focus on helping the teachers to be effective in diverse classrooms as well as in designing individual adaptations and specific learning materials.*
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> 10. *The great majority of the school community are students: they are essential assets in building an inclusive culture and supporting one another's learning.*
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> 11. *Universities with an applied mission to address societal challenges can be a significant resource to educational reform.*
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> 12. *Efforts to advance inclusive schooling can gain greater support by allying this objective to dominant issues in the wider public and political agenda in each country.*

Let us explore each of these key lessons in turn.

Key 1. *Sustained transformation of education - at the level of the whole system and at the level of the school - requires a coherent vision of inclusive schooling to drive a wide range of positive actions.*

Complex and lengthy processes of social change benefit from clear direction. At the global level both the UNCRPD and SDG 4 provide this in relation to inclusive schooling: we have summarised this direction as simply meaning 'creating learning environments which maximise the potential for every young person.... to receive high quality education alongside their peers in local schools that serve the whole community'. High quality education here implies that every student is present, participating and achieving.

Reaching Out...(3) adds detail to this definition by identifying three sets of indicators (at the levels of government, school and classroom) to guide assessments of progress towards this vision.

However, as the United Nations *General Comment* (5) on progress with implementation of Article 24 makes clear, too often national efforts are undermined by implicit and explicit contradictions in policies and working assumptions. In the countries we visited, these contradictions seem often to arise from the continuing use of ideas which derive from traditional deficit approaches to disability and their reflection in what has passed as 'special education'. For example, it was notable in all three that there is a common tendency in ordinary schools to refer to disabled young people as the 'inclusion students', thus continuing to distinguish them from other students.

Encouraging examples: In all three countries, our NGO hosts were active in preparing and disseminating materials which advance an human rights approach to school inclusion and describe the characteristics of these schools (6). However we found the simplest and clearest expression of this vision in the comments of three 11 year-old girls we met in a public school in Lima. They told us about one of their class-mates who has a serious spinal problem, making him a wheel-chair user. Speaking from their hearts (not we think from something they had been taught) they told us that every child is welcome in their class and everyone is different. They could all learn from each other and this makes diverse classrooms better for everyone. We could sense that they were making a reality of this philosophy in their own classroom.

Key 2. *Advancing inclusive schooling is a continuous process of reviewing progress against the vision and strengthening the capacity of both the education system and individual schools to be successful with all students: this process requires a strong commitment to learning from experience.*

Clearly learning is the fundamental characteristic of education: learning by students, learning by teachers as they develop new practices, learning by leaders of all kinds. But the transformation required to advance inclusive schooling also requires that the education system itself becomes a *learning system* in every school and more widely, so that policy is responding to experience in the classroom as well as *vice versa* and innovation in one area is informing innovation in another.

This is not easy to achieve. Notwithstanding popular ideas about 'evidence-based policy-making', governmental agencies are often weak in their capacity for dialogue and learning and disconnected by bureaucratic structures from the real experience of educational provision. In schools, especially the public schools we visited, the pressures on teachers and others left little space for reflection and joint review of progress.

Encouraging examples: We discuss some examples of schools investing in learning from inclusion below. At the national level we were most impressed by the commitment to systematic learning from experience - so as to improve strategies for change and specific educational interventions - in the three NGOs which were our main hosts. PMI, for example, publishes systematic reviews of progress, drawing on stakeholder perceptions, in relation to all elements in its multi-component programme for improving the social inclusion of disabled people in Bolivia (7).

Key 3. *This transformation in traditional forms of education requires creative and resilient leadership that simultaneously articulates the vision, engages and builds support from a wide range of interests and encourages this continuing process of open and self-critical reflection.*

Roles in government below those of elected Ministers are often seen as primarily administrative: the job is to carry out tasks required by policies in efficient and reliable ways. In Latin American (especially public) schools, the work of school principals and senior staff is often seen in similar ways: keeping the school

running smoothly. Important those these skills are, they are not the same as the inspiring leadership required for the major cultural changes which inclusive schooling requires. Fortunately this visionary and engaging leadership can - and does - come from many sources: some policy-makers certainly and school leaders, but also grass-roots teachers, families and students themselves all perhaps supported by independent advocacy groups and Universities. Such leadership needs to be found and nurtured.

Encouraging examples: Again, all three of the NGOs who hosted our visit are showing great qualities of leadership in their efforts to create multi-faceted strategies for educational change from their bases in civil society. Monica Cortes (on the left here) is the Director of Asdown, Colombia. She is both a parent and a teacher. Over several years she has built the capacity of her association to be a valued voice in national policy making as well as a support to parents and schools making the journey to inclusion, including by strengthening links among similar initiatives in the Americas (8).

Key 4. *To achieve national transformation, government action is required not just on law and policy but also in providing strategic leadership which fully articulates a new vision of education based on valuing diversity and mobilises the interconnected elements of 'whole system' change.*

We met Ministry of Education officials in two countries and worked with policy advocates in all three, but did not study existing policy frameworks in detail. In

each country government has made public commitments to promoting inclusive education expressed to varying degrees in laws and declarations. It is our impression however that these efforts typically fall short of what would be required to establish and monitor a concerted strategy for school transformation. As one national official noted 'It's a lot easier to produce policy than deliver local implementation.'

Raising public awareness is an important start, as is establishing the right to inclusive schooling in law, especially if there are appropriate accountability mechanisms and government encourages independent advocacy on behalf of students and their families. So is attention to curriculum and assessment arrangements which take account of all learners, especially if these are fully embraced by the teacher training institutions and in continuous professional education. It is also important that government ensures that all the resources needed to support students are invested in mainstream schools.

Again it is our impression that in all three countries public policies fall rather short of these requirements, very many young people are missing out on their right to inclusive education and there are not yet good processes for involving all the relevant stakeholders in monitoring progress at the national level. We discuss progress at the level of the school below.

Key 5. *Family associations have a critical role as partners with the education system at all levels in advancing the journey to inclusive schooling. They too need to think strategically about how best to use the modest resources of their membership to maximise positive impact.*

We know much more about the work of the national NGOs that hosted our visits. Two of these, Asdown and SPSD are associations of families which campaign to secure better lives for their disabled children (initially focusing on children with Down's Syndrome) as part of their communities. These two associations are members of a global network of such organisations, almost all of which were started by parents to help their own disabled child and over time have grown to involve many other families, offering services to disabled people and taking on advocacy

roles in public policy. PMI is a little different in that it is the education programme of a charity inspired by the global movement to advance 'community-based rehabilitation' of disabled people. This philosophy also puts great emphasis on the role of families and communities in promoting social inclusion: PMI supports Bolivian families in many of the same ways as our other two hosts. (Two of the smaller associations we visited, the emerging family network in Paipa and Equipo 21 in Arequipa are performing similar functions at the local level.)

Encouraging examples: We were inspired by almost all of what we saw of the work of these family-oriented organisations. Many disabled and other minority-group children are severely disadvantaged and families face a lifetime of struggle to secure their rights alongside other people. Nevertheless families we met were strong in their efforts for their own children, in supporting other families and in their commitment to build more inclusive societies based on equal citizenship.

There are many overlapping aspects to this work. In Paipa, a newly-emerging network of families - encouraged by a mother who is an excellent 'networker' and her adult son and meeting in the lounge of their home - are supporting each other in raising expectations for their disabled children and recognising their right to enjoy life in the same ways as other local people. They are also pioneering their own version of 'life planning' with young disabled adults and building 'circles of support' around them. In similar style, the association in Arequipa is mobilising community assets to create employment opportunities for young disabled people e.g. through a community bakery and a market garden.

In all three of the national organisations there is well developed work to help children and families access mainstream education through assisting individual families, educating families involved in particular schools and building a family advocacy movement. To varying degrees each has also employed staff and taken on other functions including raising public awareness, policy advocacy, teacher training and support to individual schools making the journey to inclusion. A common aspiration is to use demonstrations of inclusive practice in a sample of interested schools to inform and persuade Education Ministries to advance inclusive schooling more widely through public policy and investment.

In this wider work, all three national organisations have recognised the importance of building civil society alliances so as to strengthen their voice in public policy and extend the coverage of these core functions to more families and more schools. Like governments, they face the strategic challenge of deciding how best to use (and strengthen) their modest resources to best effect. There can be tensions between, for example, seeking to be a partners with government and schools and at the same time acting as advocates for families and critics of current performance. There are also risks in being 'spread too thin', as for example, NGOs take on a role in teacher training, or not being able to work

with individual schools long enough or intensely enough to ensure that the whole school is on a sustainable path to inclusion.
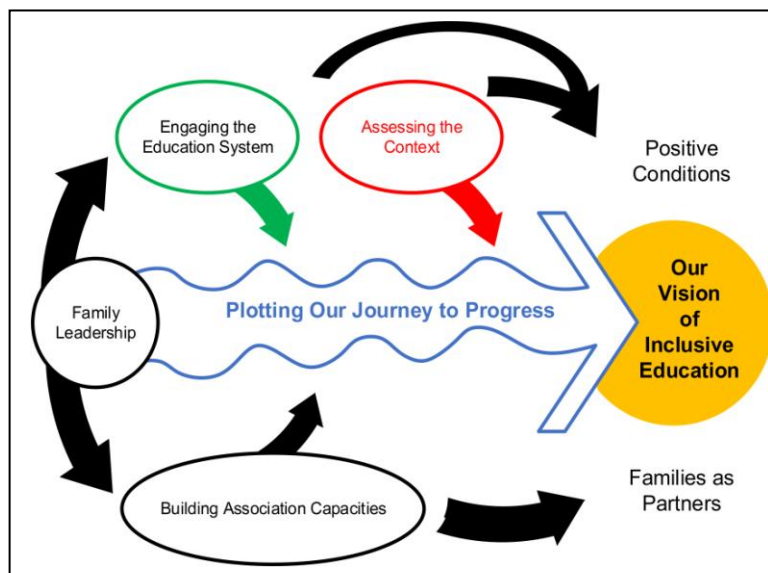
The second part of **Key 5** reflects our recognition of the importance of family associations and other NGOs themselves engaging in regular strategic planning and review both to test their working assumptions about how large-scale transformation can be achieved and focus their change efforts (discussed further in Reference 8**).**

Key 6. *Transformational change is most dependent on developing the capacities of teachers and other practitioners to think and act differently. This requires significant reform of basic professional education in the Universities and other training institutions; it also requires greatly strengthened opportunities for continuing professional development within the schools.*

Teaching a more diverse community of students may be more rewarding to good teachers (and we met many of these) but it is also more demanding of their preparation and skills: they need good training and ongoing support in their classrooms. With the important exception of the post-graduate inclusive education programme at UNAB (in Bucaramanga) we didn't visit any teacher training colleges but were told that 'attention to diversity' is often not a major feature of existing basic training and indeed that many teachers have very limited understanding of disability. Equally, and just as critical in efforts to transform existing (especially public) schools, there is often neither space, time or support for teachers to reflect on their daily experiences with other teachers and learn from parents and other professional experts.

Encouraging examples: All three of our national hosts invest in raising awareness among teachers and supporting their efforts to advance inclusion in their own schools. In Lima, for example, SPSD is hosting a learning network for private school Principals and their inclusion coordinators to share experience across schools. In La Paz, PMI staff are working quite intensively with individual teachers and their public schools to ensure that children, especially those with cognitive disabilities, are participating and achieving in ordinary classrooms. A particular focus of this work is helping teachers make adaptations to the curriculum and develop tailored, low cost (i.e. home-made) learning materials which support these adaptations. PMI has published a detailed guide to these processes designed to help rehabilitation teams, families and teachers (9).

Key 7. *Individual schools need to be a prime focus for efforts to achieve educational transformation. Sustainable transformation requires in turn that schools become small learning communities, reflecting deeply on their experiences so as to shape their own journey to inclusive schooling.*

We have argued that schools, especially public schools, flourish or otherwise in a climate created by the education system as a whole. They also depend on what teachers and other professionals bring to the school. And they are part of their local communities where children and families live. We also argue that successful inclusion depends on careful attention to how each student learns best and management of the classroom so every child is able to participate.

However what students join is not just a classroom but the whole school. It is schools which foster a collaborative culture where every student is welcome. It is schools which try to reduce physical and other barriers to full participation. It is schools which provide classroom assistance and specialized technology and materials when this is needed. It is schools which ensure teachers and others are involved in continuing professional development and promote opportunities for shared problem-solving.

This school-wide (rather than single classroom) focus is important because students move between classes and take part in whole school activities (witness the play ground). It's important because individual teachers move on, while the school and its culture continue. It's also important because, as we saw, enthusiastic teachers who welcome diversity in their classrooms may soon find more and more students who are 'different' being sent to their classes. Progress is more likely where all teachers accept responsibility for all students. Equally, one school in an area may start to be seen as the local 'inclusive school', freeing others to be exclusive. Concentrating students in either of these ways is likely to undermine inclusive practice in the longer term.

Reflecting the first three of our lessons here, school transformation requires vision, leadership and a school improvement strategy based on continuous learning from experience - especially addressed to assessing the presence, participation and achievement of all students. These processes need to be based on partnership between the school (that is all staff, not just teachers), its students and the wider community - especially the families of all students (which in turn means that families need to be helped to understand the benefits of inclusion for all). And while, as we saw, this strategy can be greatly helped by expertise and facilitation from outside - like that offered by our three host organisations - ultimately the school has to take responsibility for its own transformation: what we call *developing the school from within.*

Encouraging examples: We describe above examples of the work our hosts are doing with both public and private schools to promote inclusion. One of the latter is Stephanía's own school in Bucaramanga, part of the world-wide La Salle network, inspired by the Christian teachings of John the Baptist. These schools have a commitment to careful reflection on values and their expression in practice. Stephanía's school has already welcomed some (mostly young) disabled children into its classrooms and good teachers, alongside their students, are working out for themselves how to manage everyone's learning in these more diverse classrooms. The Principal has initiated a process of whole school reflection, starting positively with the question 'What are we learning from these children about ways of advancing inclusive schooling?' and using this reflection as a basis for the next question 'What more is possible?' for them and others that the school will be welcoming. We hope that what Stephanía has learnt from our journey will be a valuable resource to this process and that her school will link with other schools to create a wider network for sharing ideas and experiences on school development.

On this last point, we have already observed that all three of our host organisations have a 'scaling up' strategy for national change, seeking to use the experience of innovative schools to inform national policy - and of course this is

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essential for education system change. But we also think that there is much to be gained from a 'scaling across' strategy in which good schools support and learn from each other and increasingly welcome other interested schools into their learning network.

Key 8. *Most planned learning takes place in classrooms: teachers need the support, confidence and skills to manage their classrooms and plan their lessons so that all students are participating and learning.*

Building on **Key 7**, Schools need to attend carefully to how they establish the conditions within which teachers have the autonomy and support to be innovators. Teachers are the leaders in their own classrooms, sometimes with additional support (not often in the schools we visited), working with their students to ensure that everyone is participating and learning. We know that in all classes, especially those with a diverse group of students, this requires careful attention to accommodating the needs of each student through universal design for learning and adjustments to meet individual needs. It involves differentiating lessons and learning materials, developing individualised learning plans, using varied teaching methods and promoting cooperative activities in which students help each other. All this constitutes inclusive pedagogy.

We appreciate that achieving these things involves tensions, for example that identifying differences among students may be both helpful (e.g. in attracting additional resources) and discriminating (e.g. in making some seem 'different' from their peers). All this can be especially challenging for teachers used to traditional classroom methods based implicitly on the assumption that all students are the same. In classes we visited where teachers were trying very hard we nevertheless saw some where the classroom was not making full use of students as a resource to each other, where individual adjustments sometimes separate rather than include disabled students in the lessons and where the

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understanding of student learning needs relies too heavily on medical or psychological diagnosis (locating any learning problems within the student) rather than the teachers' own assessments of how the student can best be helped to learn.

> Encouraging examples: As we have already noted above, we also visited classrooms where, through the support of our host organisations, teachers were gaining the confidence and experience to do all of these things. Some were also discovering that teaching methods and materials they had developed to help particular children (e.g. to learn addition or multiplication) were helpful to all students, or that offering peer support to children with learning difficulties assisted the helpers as well as the helped. More generally we sensed that welcoming diversity in the classroom enables all students to grow in understanding of diversity in the wider community of which their schools are a part.

Key 9. *Expert support to schools needs to focus on helping the teachers to be effective in diverse classrooms as well as in designing individual adaptations and specific learning materials.*

This is a continuation of the two previous Keys. Some well-resourced schools, usually private ones, employed in-house experts e.g. psychologists, to help teachers understand better disabled and other students. Until recently in one country, some private schools asked parents to fund additional classroom support to their disabled children. Some public systems deployed staff with special education experience to assist schools accepting students who might otherwise be excluded. And our three host organisations, especially PMI in Bolivia, offer external support to partner schools in helping teachers design adaptations to meet individual children's needs (as well as supporting their families and engaging parents to support learning at home).

In the latter case certainly, this support was greatly welcomed by committed teachers. However there can also be down-sides to external help. Teachers may come to feel dependent on external advice. Teaching assistance may be very

helpful but if it is focused on particular students rather than on assisting the teacher, it may reduce the students' inclusive participation. Assistance to schools through special education system staff may encourage the idea that some students are the special educator's responsibility, not really that of the class teacher. We sense that classroom inclusion works best where the teacher retains full responsibility for leading and managing her class, while drawing on external expertise and support to do this well.

> Encouraging examples: The 'whole class' approach to inclusion is nicely illustrated in our photo (above) from a school in La Paz. One of the students in this class suffered a serious accident as a result of which he is progressively losing his hearing. He has been equipped with a hearing aid although this may decline in usefulness over time. Meanwhile the whole class, including the class teacher, have taught themselves sign language, ensuring that they share one communication medium with the hearing-impaired student and increasing their own skills for participation in the wider community.

Key 10. *The great majority of the school community are students: they are essential assets in building an inclusive culture and supporting one another's learning.*

Certainly in the public schools we visited, most resources - adequate buildings, classroom assistance beyond the teacher, teaching materials, technological assistance etc. - are in short supply. The only well-supplied asset is the students themselves. As we have noted from **Key 1** onwards, mobilising their contributions - as community builders, champions for inclusion, partners with staff in maintaining social cohesion, collaborative learners and peer supporters - is essential to success in the classroom and at the whole school level. At both these levels all staff have a role to play in inclusive community development and so do students willing to take on leadership roles, for example in student councils, as class captains and as inclusion champions.

Key 11. *Universities with an applied mission to address societal challenges can be a significant resource to educational reform.*

Universities have a privileged status in our societies as a base for independent research and the higher education of students who will become leaders in their fields. This includes the training of teachers and other educational leaders. We visited only one University in our journey, UNAB, where a postgraduate diploma in inclusive education has attracted 153 teachers and others over 7 years, creating a network of skilled practitioners spread throughout the Colombian region of Santander. Moreover Education Faculty staff understand the importance of working directly with Secretaries of Education and individual schools to build their capacity to respond effectively to emerging public policies.

Universities which accept their social mission can go further than this. They should aspire to be models of inclusion in higher education. They can offer their resources to establish independent forums for mutual learning among educational innovators. They can invest in supporting programmes of community development and strategic change.

Encouraging examples: In Arequipa, we learnt that the ancient University of San Augustin had established a training course for people with cognitive disabilities seeking employment in the community bakery created by Equipo 21. Course teachers have been skilful in adapting their methods to help people with low reading skills. The University is also a customer of the bakery.

In Bucaramanga, another part of UNAB is working over several years with the displaced communities of Nuevo Girón to develop local citizen leadership (mostly women) and help these leaders in the urban planning required to improve everyone's quality of life. Publicly-funded education should be an important part of this plan.

Key 12. *Efforts to advance inclusive schooling can gain greater support by allying this objective to dominant issues in the wider public and political agenda in each country.*

As we noted at the outset, our work in Mexico was a little different to that in the three South American countries. In Puebla, David is helping the network 'Puebla para todos' - another alliance of NGOs (including disabled people's organisations, urban lawyers, a business confederation and a University) - in a programme seeking to ensure, to quote their slogan, that 'disabled people are partners in making our city better for everyone' (10).

This network has understood that their advocacy on behalf of disabled people is likely to me more effective if it is expressed in ways that link it to the main local and national priorities. Globally the biggest shared policy agenda for the next 15 years is expressed through the Sustainable Development Goals. One of these, Goal 11, is addressed to making cities sustainable and inclusive. This offers a mainstream framework for their efforts.

(Interestingly in Lima - see the photo below - we met self-advocates supported by SPSD who demonstrated their recognition of the importance of the SDGs through producing an easy-to-read guide to the 17 goals, publicly launched during our visit at the office of the International Labour Organisation.)

The SDGs are important everywhere but different countries have their own dominant public policy issues. In Colombia there has been 60 years of armed internal conflict, leaving six million people displaced from their homes. Currently there is significant but fragile progress in a national process of peace and reconciliation. Advocates there can make the argument that inclusive education is an important long term instrument of community peace-building (11).

In Peru, advocates can draw on both the SDGs (especially SDG 4) and the wider interest in human rights to advance inclusive schooling. Perhaps most radically, in Bolivia - self-described as a multi-national state - there is a powerful political agenda expressed in the language of 'decolonisation'. Advocates can gain traction by arguing that inclusive schooling is an important basis for strengthening the autonomy and self-confidence of communities that have suffered centuries of oppression. A dominant issue indeed!

References

1. The leading British educationalist, Sir Ken Robinson, argues powerfully that if education is to prepare all young people for the challenges of the 21st Century, radical reform is required in most countries to produce a more balanced, personalised and creative system which serves all learners. See especially Ken Robinson *Creative Schools* Penguin (20160. En español: Escuelas creativas. La revolución que está transformando la educación.

2. An earlier similar journey also included Mexico and Colombia as well as Guatemala and Nicaragua. Heidy Tatiana Araque Sierra and David Towell *Advancing Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society* Centre for Inclusive Futures (2011). En español: *Formentar la Educación Inclusiva para Forjar una Sociedad Inclusiva*

3. International Bureau of Education/UNESCO *Reaching Out To All Learners: A resource pack for supporting inclusive education* (2016, On line)

4. Gordon L. Porter and David Towell *Advancing Inclusive Education: Keys to transformational change in public education systems* (Inclusive Education Canada and Centre for Inclusive Futures, 2017) En español *Promoviendo La Educación Inclusiva: Claves para el cambio transformacional en los sistemas de educación.*

5. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment No. 4 *Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education* (United Nations, 2016)

6. See for example, Sociedad Peruana De Síndrome Down (2018) *Personas Diferentes, Derechos Iguales* and *Una Escuela Para Todos.*

7. Programa Mundo Inclusivo (2017) *Sistematización de procesos y experiencias exitosas Programa Mundo Inclusivo.*

8. Monica Cortes tells the Asdown story in Monica Cortes, Linda Jordan, Madalina Turza & David Towell *Families As Leaders In The Journey To Inclusive Education* (Centre for Inclusive Futures, 2018). En español *Las Familias Como Lideres En La Camino A La Educación Inclusiva.*

9. Programa Mundo Inclusivo *Manual De Inclusión Educativa* and *Anexo 1: Tabla De Evaluación Del Desarrollo - Para Equipos de Rehabilitación basada en la Communidad, Familias y Maestros* Caritas La Paz Programa RBC Mundo Inclusivo, CBM y LFTW (2014).

10. See Clare Wightman, Lucie Stephens & David Towell *Cities For All: Disabled People As Partners in Making our Towns And Cities Better For Everyone* Centre for Inclusive Futures (2018). En español: *Ciudades Para Todos: Personas*

Discapacitadas como Socios en la Transformación de Nuestros Pueblos y Ciudades, Haciéndolas Mejores Para Todos.

11. See Sol Natalia Giraldo, Victoria Illingworth and David Towell *Education For A Better Tomorrow: Towards a curriculum for peace, sustainability and inclusive citizenship in Colombia* Centre for Inclusive Futures (2015). En español: *Educación Para Un Mañana Mejor: Hacia un plan de estudios para la paz, la sostenibilidad y la ciudadanía inclusiva en Colombia.*

All the publications listed here from the Centre for Inclusive Futures (English and Spanish) are available on line at :
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