



AMBILAVENCE OF INCLUSION AS PRINCIPLED EDUCATION PRACTICE IN FINNISH BASIC EDUCATION

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POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN FINLAND AND CHINA*

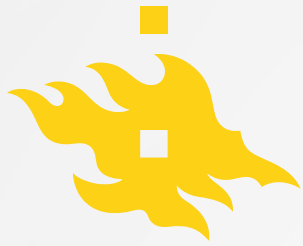
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Inclusion in Education

(Armstrong et al., 2011; Danfoth & Naraian, 2015; Graham & Slee, 2008; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Schuelka et. al. 2019)

- Ongoing **principled *process***, not an *outcome*
- Requires commitment and dedication to be carried out through alignment between inclusive policies, culture, and practices
- The values and aims of the philosophy of inclusion in education should be the guiding principles of the letter and the spirit of education policy
 - Respecting and celebrating human diversity by denaturalising normality
 - Rejecting medical and psychological explanations of educational difficulties and the ensuing categorisations of difference
 - Promoting equality, equity, social participation and sense of belonging
 - Removing barriers to learning and social participation
- Examples of intersecting issues that pose potential barriers to inclusion in education
 - class, gender, race, and disability
 - racialisation, racism, ableism, disablism, and hetero- and cis-normativity
 - geographic location, poverty, resource allocation



INCLUSION AS SPECIAL EDUCATION AGENDA – PROGRESS TOWARDS INCLUSION IN EDUCATION IN FINNISH POLICY

• Towards Education for All 1921-1997

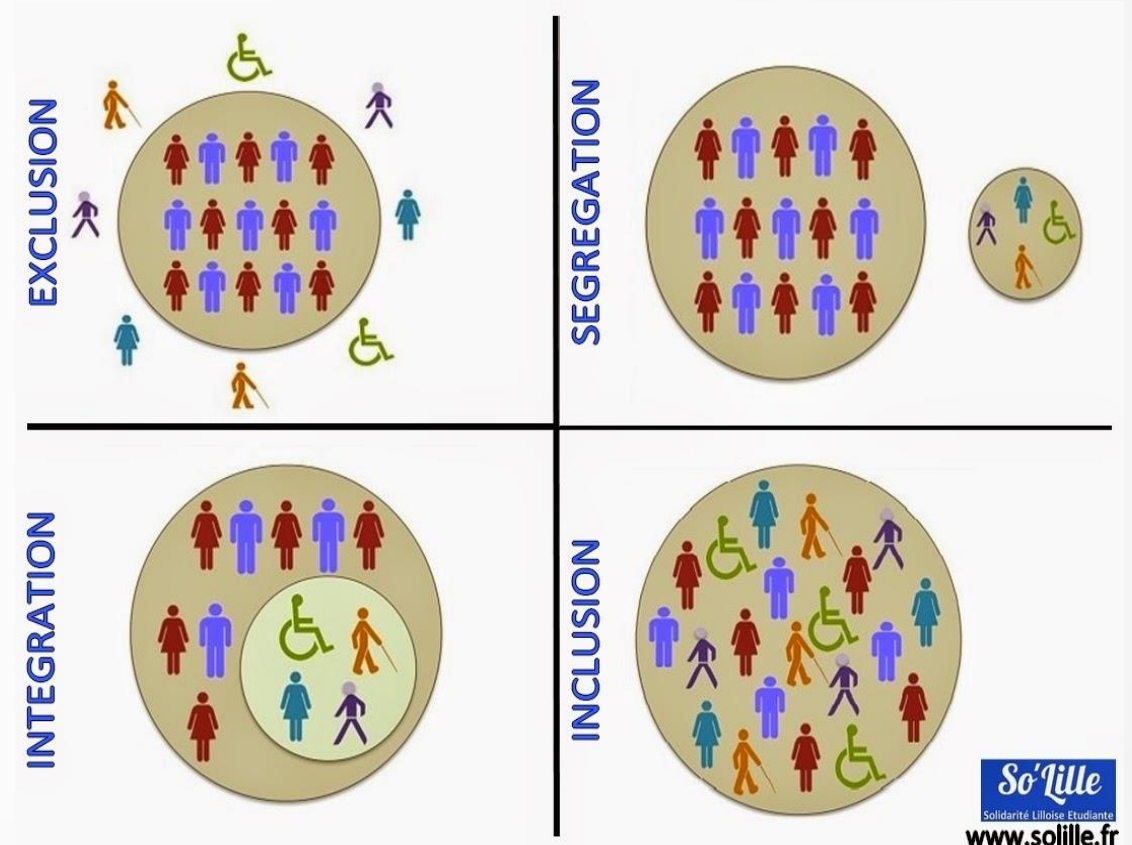
- *Education for all at the system level*
- Students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities integrated mostly in special schools with separate curricula
- General Education Schools & Special Schools

• Towards Inclusive Education in early 21st century

- Current Basic Education Act 628/1998
- Enabled full-time SE of students with disabilities in general education classes
- 2-tiered support model
 - General education
 - Special education (SE)

• Special Education Reform 2010

- Act 628/ 1998, amendment 642/2010
- Learning and Schooling Support in 2011: 3-tiered support model
- Emphasis on
 - The principle of neighborhood schooling among same aged peers
 - Preventative, timely, sufficient support for the learning and growth for all students
- Responsibility for educating heterogenous student population *from special education to general education*
- Hallmarked Finnish child-centered approach to promoting inclusion in education



Picture of the So'Lille association : <http://www.solille.fr/>





AMBIGUOUS EDUCATION POLICY GUIDANCE ABOUT INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Assumed values of inclusion

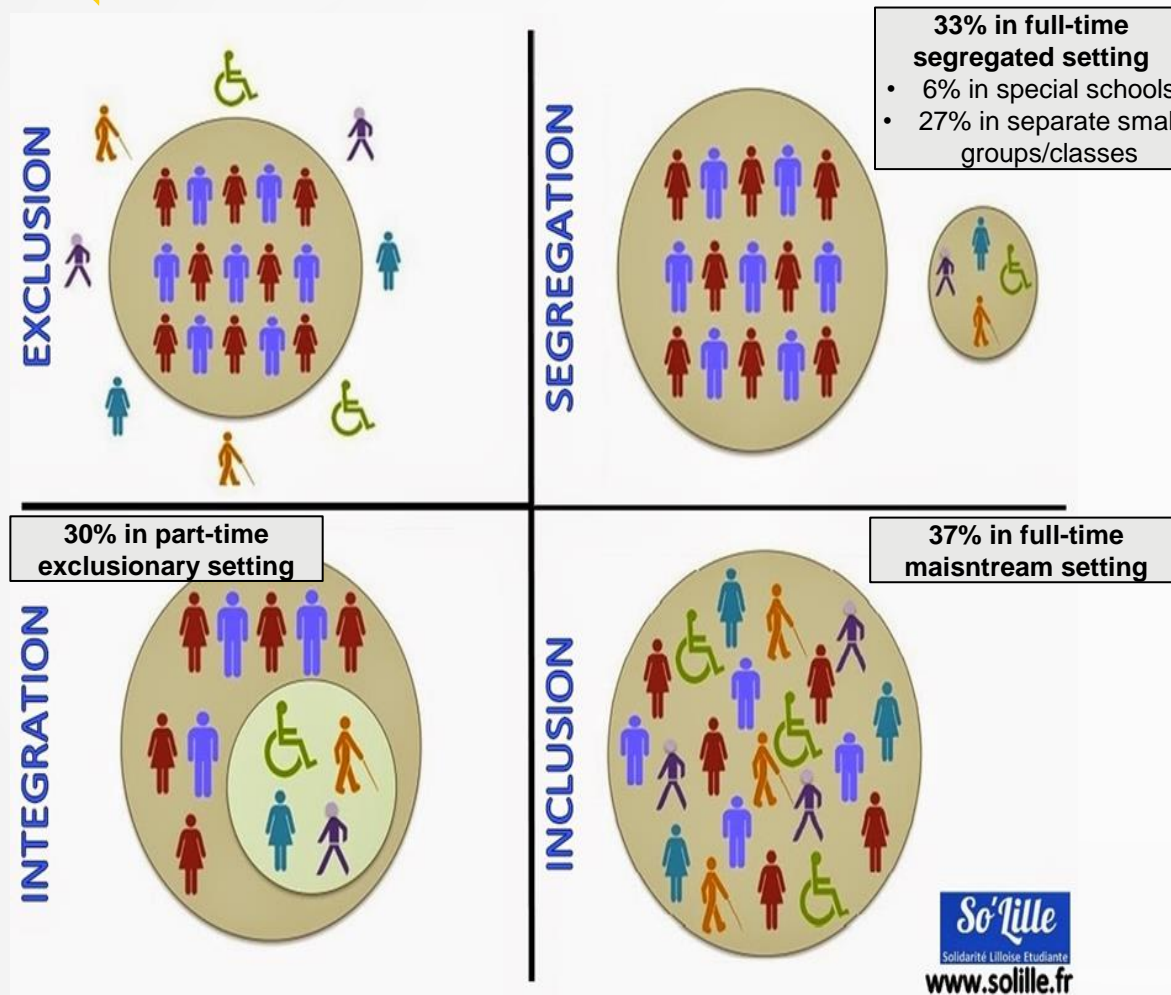
- **Basic Education Act assumed values of inclusion**
 - Equality and Equity as aims of basic education (628/1998, 2§)
 - Neighborhood school principle (628/1998, 6§)
 - Child-centered schooling to promote healthy growth and development (628/1998, 3§)
- **National Core Curriculum (NCC)**
 - Principles of social inclusion present
 - Emphasis on accessibility of teaching and learning
 - Individualized supports
 - School cultures built on values of equity and equality, anti-discrimination, participation, interdependency, and reciprocity

Contradiction

- **Basic Education Act**
 - Inclusion is **not** mentioned in the Basic Education Act
 - Principle: neighborhood school *preferably* for all
 - Does not explicitly provide a guide about inclusion in education
 - Inclusion in education equated with SEN education
- **National Core Curriculum**
 - Inclusion only mentioned ones
 - Inclusion not conceptualized
 - None of the content explicitly linked to inclusion
 - Equates the guiding principles of inclusion with integration and exclusion

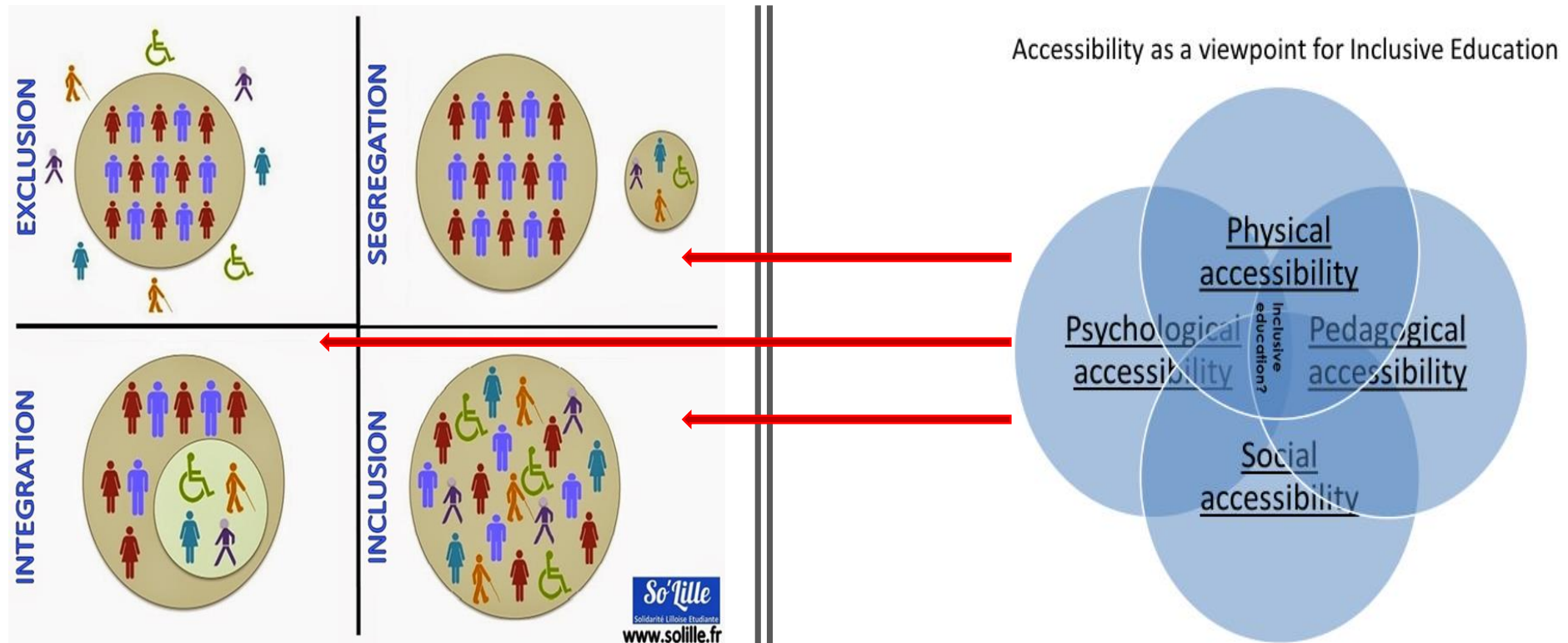


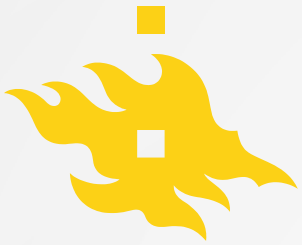
AMBIVALENCE OF INCLUSION AS PRINCIPLED PRACTICE: PLACEMENT



- Student placement reflects the state of inclusion in education at the system level; does not distinguish inclusion from physical integration
- The number of special schools has decreased steadily since the late 1990s
- 60 special schools in 2021
 - Unknown how many former special schools are administratively merged with schools listed as mainstream schools, while still providing education full-time in separate small groups based on the disability grouping of students (e.g., autism) or other rationale
- **In 2021, 9% of all students received special support (Tier 3)**
- Statistics of Finland: Inclusion is 80-100% in mainstream schools

Accessibility in segregated, integrated or inclusive setting?





PROMISING OUTLOOK ON FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

- The need for defining inclusion in the Basic Education Act as the **premise** and **value system** in preschool and basic education is recognized
 - *Oikeus oppia* (in English: Right to learn) development program initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture
- Practices supporting these premises are planned to be clarified in the next National Core Curriculum
- The tiered Learning and Schooling support system will be strengthened in the Basic Education Act and the NCC by providing clear definitions and guidance for their implementation
- Integration of SE knowhow more into teacher training programs
- VIP network – a national network of demanding interprofessional support
 - Includes almost all municipalities
 - Consultation and support for schooling and learning in collaboration with local schools



THANK YOU