Strength through Diversity, Phase II: Disabilities, learning impairments and mental health

SYRINE EL ABED ~ MONTSERRAT MACUER
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Outline

- Introduction
- What are Special Needs?
- What are Special Educational Needs (SEN)?
- Some country examples
  - The case of Dyslexia
  - The case of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Findings and Recommendations
- Conclusions

Introduction

- **93 million children** in the world live with moderate to severe disabilities.

- Almost **one-fifth** of students may develop a special educational need during their schooling years in OECD countries.

- These children must be taken into consideration: it's their right (CRC, CRPD, Salamanca), it's a global commitment (MDG2, SDG4), it's good economics, and of course, it's good socially.

What are special needs?

In general

Special needs in general (1/3)

Medical and social models

	The medical model	The social model
Issue	Disease directly caused by a medical problem.	Problem due to an incomplete integration of individuals in the society/environment.
Target	Individual changes (intrinsic change)	Social environment generating a complex collection of conditions
Mean to tackle the issue	Medical care.	Social action.
Political intervention	Considers the reform the health care policy.	Considers the question of Human Rights.

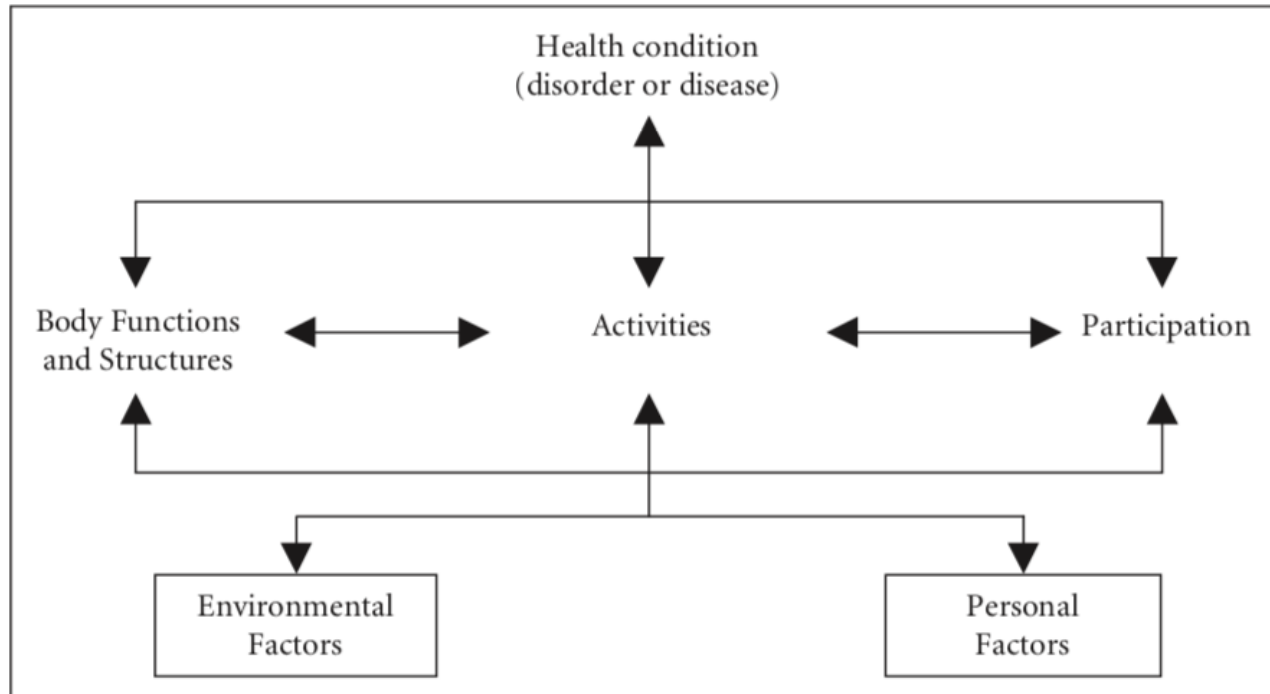# Special needs in general (2/3)

The biopsychosocial perspective

The biopsychosocial perspective is:

- A combination of the social and medical models.

- A multidimensional approach that aims at understanding disability from a biological, individual and social perspectives.

- An approach that does not deny the impact of impairments on functioning, but rather aims at enhancing the description of health conditions and impairments with information focusing on learning and development.

Special needs in general (3/3)

The ICF-CY perspective:

Source: WHO, 2007

What are special needs?

In education

Special needs in education (1/2)

The literature

	Definition	Aim	What is included
Descriptive definitions	Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners and others categorized as 'having special educational needs'	Educational or remedial interventions	Disabled or special needs part
	Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion	Avoid exclusion	The school/classroom scope
	Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion	Avoid risks to attendance to school Social inclusion	All vulnerable groups in need to overcome discrimination
Prescriptive definitions	Inclusion as developing the school for all	Mutually sustained relationship between schools and community	All the environment around disability but still focus on learner
	Inclusion as "Education for all"	Global targets for specific groups	Global scale
	Inclusion as principled approach to education and society	Explicit values underlying actions practices and policies	Cultures, policies and practices in educational institutions

Source: author's adaptation from Essi Kesälahti & SaiVäyrynen, 2013

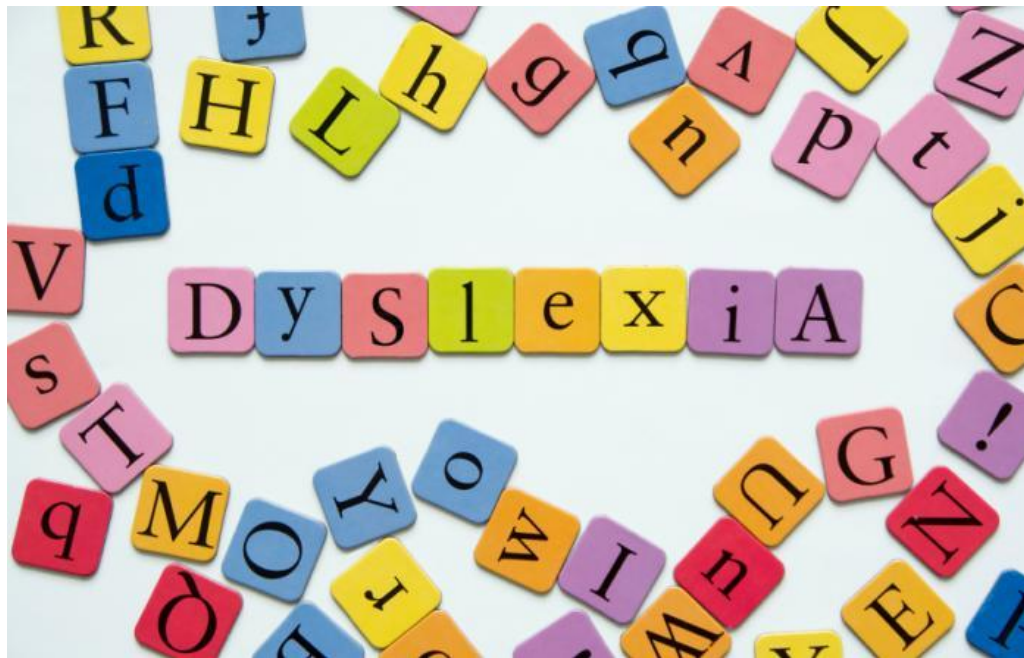# Special needs in education (2/2)

Different approaches across countries

Approach	Characteristics	Countries in the category
One track approach countries	Only few specialized structures for students with SEN exist, the vast majority of structures is regular structure. School programs and structures are adapted to each child regardless the background, capacity or needs	Nordics countries (Sweden, Norway, Island) Southern Europe countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal), Australia, New Zealand, USA
Two track approach countries	There is a high share of specialized structures, with a percentage of scholarization in those structures higher than 2,5% of the total number of students. Scholarization of students with special needs can be quasi exclusively in specialized structures.	Belgium, Germany (is moving to multitrack approach), Netherland, Czech Republic, Hungary.
Multitrack approach countries	The system is a mixture of the two precedent approaches. The three types of scholarization that may exist are specialized structures, specialized classrooms and regular classrooms.	France, England, Denmark, Poland, Ireland, Canada, Chile, Japan

Source: the European Agency for Adapted and Inclusive Education and author's adaptations
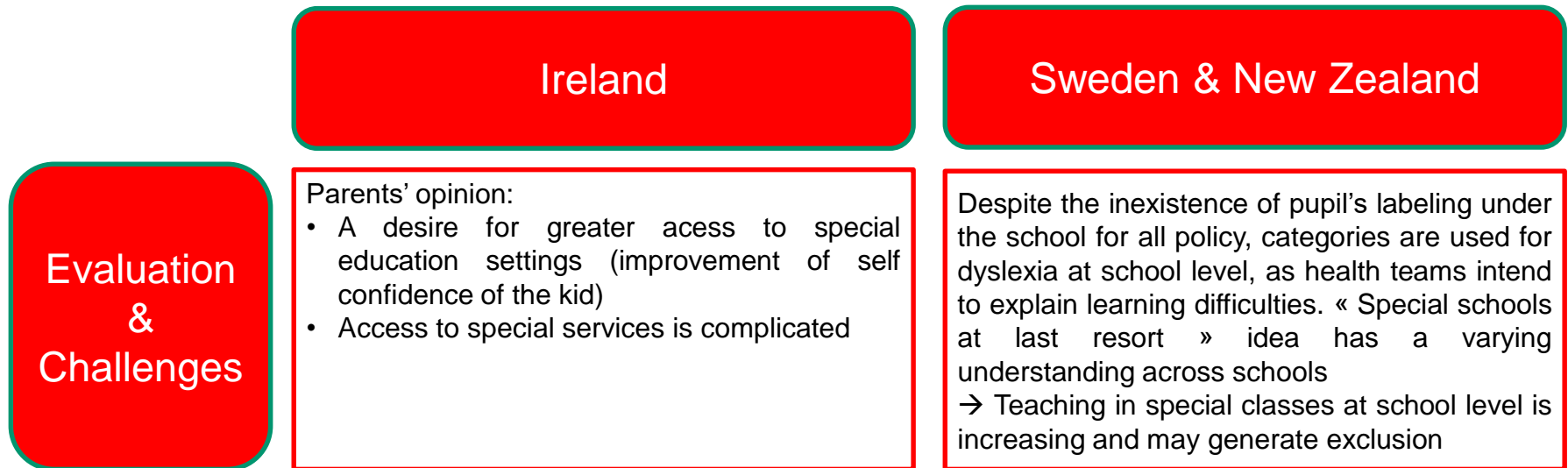
Some country examples of

Dyslexia in some OECD countries (1/2)

	Ireland	Sweden	New Zealand	Italy
Definition	The term of dyslexia is widely used. It is part of "specific learning difficulties" or "learning disabilities"	No official definition of dyslexia	"Dyslexia is a spectrum of SL difficulties, is evident when accurate and/or fluent reading and writing skills, develop incompletely or with difficulties"	Enacted in country's legislation. Dyslexia involves a phonological skills
Eligibility criteria	A test is run by a psychologist to assess the student's functioning	An IEP is established for each child	Early identification and specialist intervention	A diagnoses is run to define cases of dylexia
Policy	There are three types of settings: - Resource teaching - Reading units (special classes) - Special schools	Enrollment in mainstream settings, local solutions are provided at school level	Systematic and sustained process of highly individualized, skilled teaching focused on written language, with specialist support	Compensatory methods are applied to all children with dyslexia. Early intervention method is utilized in Italy

Dyslexia in some OECD countries (2/2)

Ireland	Sweden & New Zealand

Evaluation & Challenges

Parents' opinion: • A desire for greater acess to special education settings (improvement of self confidence of the kid) • Access to special services is complicated	Despite the inexistence of pupil's labeling under the school for all policy, categories are used for dyslexia at school level, as health teams intend to explain learning difficulties. « Special schools at last resort » idea has a varying understanding across schools → Teaching in special classes at school level is increasing and may generate exclusion

➡ Parents and kids need to be systematically involved in the choice of the type setting

➡ Even in countries where the policy for SEN is the « school for all » policy, a competition between social and medical models may exist, mainly for learning impairments (Sweden, New Zealand, Spain).
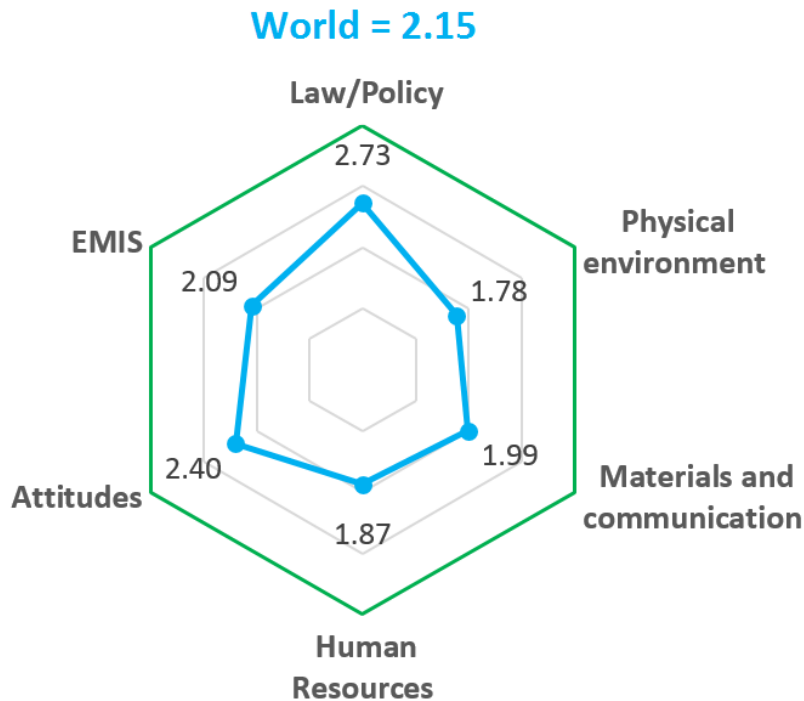
Some country examples of

The Case of ASD

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders** (ASD) means a range of a neurodevelopmental disorders in which a child exhibits *impaired development in social interaction and language, and repetitive, or a restricted range of activities*.

- Autism is often referred to as a spectrum disorder, meaning that the behavioral symptoms and characteristics can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe

ASD in France vs. USA

	France	United States
Definition	Developmental disorder defined by (a) the presence of abnormal or impaired development that is manifest before 3 years, and (b) abnormal functioning in all the 3 areas of psychopathology.	Developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior. It is said to be a "developmental disorder" because symptoms generally appear in the first two years of life.
Eligibility criteria	Assessment of the child's needs is carried out by the Maison Départementale des Personnes Handicapées (MDPH).	Special Education Services evaluates based on developmental evaluation, a speech-language assessment, a evaluation of adaptive or real life skills, etc.
Policy	Personalised education provision through the use of speciality appointed staff (auxiliaire de vie scolaire) and the provision of appropriate equipment and facilities.	"Least restrictive environment", or mainstreaming.

Challenges & Recommendations

World = 2.15

Radar chart values:
- Law/Policy: 2.73
- Physical environment: 1.78
- Materials and communication: 1.99
- Human Resources: 1.87
- Attitudes: 2.40
- EMIS: 2.09

1 = bad; 2 = poor; 3 = fair; 4 = good

Source: UNICEF

Moderate progress
- Legislation and policies

Still some way to go
- Data collection
- Attitudes

Serious Weaknesses
- Teacher training
- Accessible schools
- Learning materials

Conclusions

Despite the wide variations we found across OECD countries in the identification of students with SEN, our investigation shows that:

- While progress has been made in recent there remain significant gaps, especially in reaching and including children with disabilities.
- Key policies related to education leave out children with disabilities.
- Inclusive education leads to enhanced learning outcomes for all, if well implemented.

Merci de votre attention!

Contact:
Syrine El Abed: syrine.elabed@sciencespo.fr
Montserrat Macuer: montserrat.macuer@sciencespo.fr