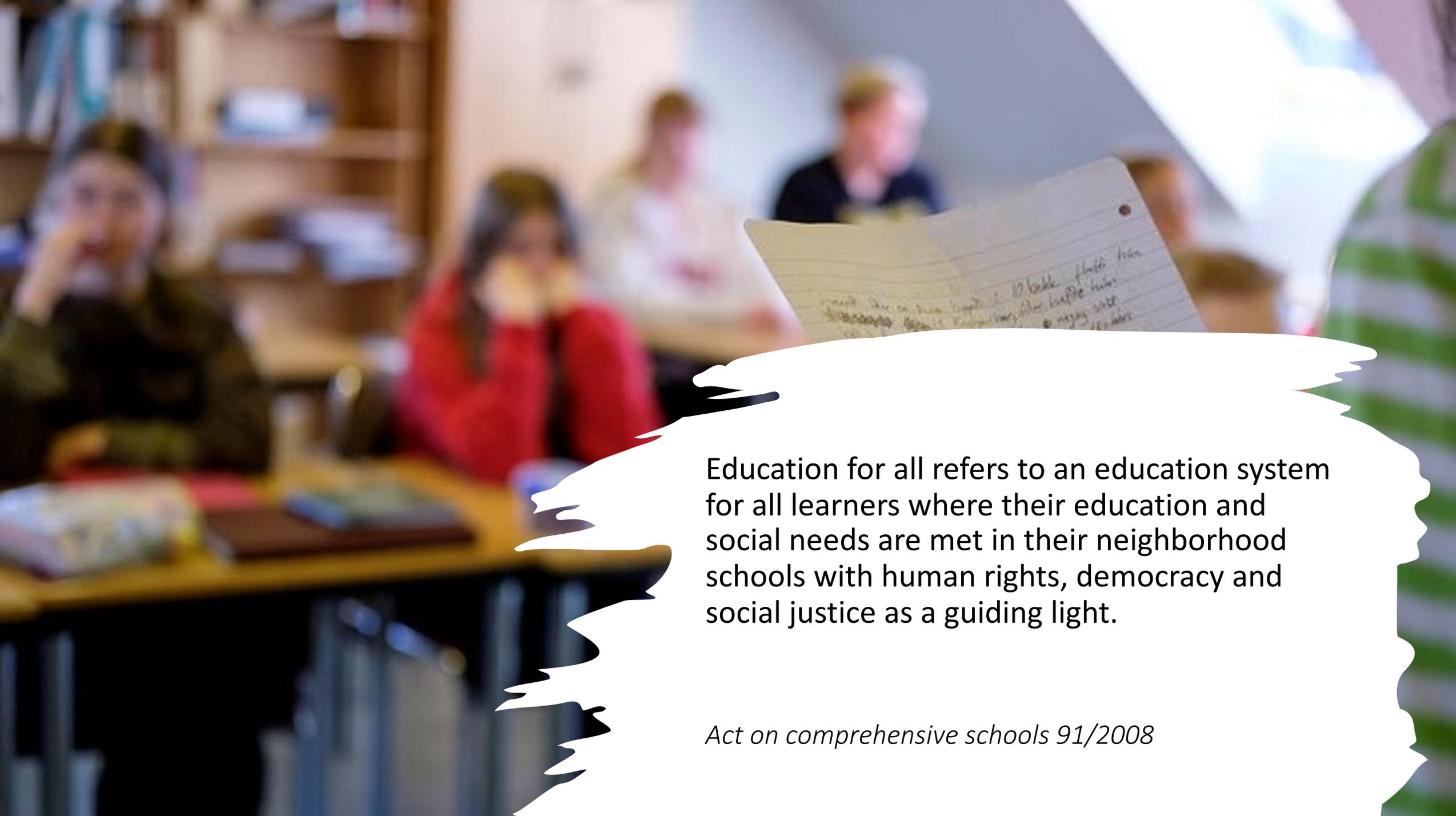


# Inclusive Education in Icelandic compulsory education: Status and prospects

Edda Óskarsdóttir associate professor  
School of Education – University of Iceland

# Education Act, Regulations and National Curriculum

- Basic School Act (2008)
- Regulation for Learners with Special Needs (2010)
- National Curriculum (2011)
  - Six fundamental pillars
    - Literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality, health and welfare, creativity



Education for all refers to an education system for all learners where their education and social needs are met in their neighborhood schools with human rights, democracy and social justice as a guiding light.

*Act on comprehensive schools 91/2008*

How inclusive  
is the school  
system?



# Audit of the system of inclusive education

The audit covered:

- Pre-school through upper-secondary education
- All responsible funding bodies
- All school level stakeholders, including learners and their families.



- Focus group interviews
- Individual interviews
- Online survey
- School visits



**EUROPEAN AGENCY**  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

# EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ICELAND

## External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education - Findings

1. Inclusive education is defined by all stakeholders as an approach for improving the quality of education of all learners.

- Common understanding of inclusive education is not in place.
- There is a lack of clarity of the concept inclusive education and how it should be implemented in practice.

2. Legislation and policy for inclusive education has the goal of promoting equal opportunities for all learners.

- Strong agreement to support the goals and aims of inclusive education.
- Lack of guidance how to translate the policy aims and objectives into action plans and practice.

# EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ICELAND

## External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education - Findings

3. Policy for inclusive education is effectively implemented at all levels.

- Needs much more work!
- There is a call for the effectiveness of support systems, funding mechanisms and governance, and quality assurance procedures.

4. All stakeholders, at all levels are enabled to think and act inclusively in their daily practice.

- The education system does not fully enable participants to think and act inclusively in their daily practice.
- There are examples of innovative practice in relation to school organisation, curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, support for learners, development opportunities and effective communication.

# EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ICELAND

## External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education - Findings

5. Resource allocation is equitable, efficient and cost-effective.

- In many school phases they are not equitable or efficient.
- The current funding processes are seen as a barrier to developments in inclusive practice.

6. Governance and quality assurance mechanisms ensure co-ordinated and effective implementation of inclusive education policy and practice.

- It is not viewed as effective or that it supports or informs the work of stakeholders.

7. Professional development issues at all system levels are effectively addressed.

- Participants did not find that their initial education and/or on-going continuous professional development

# Three key levers for developing the system

01

Stakeholder debate on what inclusive education should look like in practice

02

Agreement on minimum levels of service provision supporting inclusive education in all schools

03

Review and rationalisation of the current resource allocation systems

# Responding to the audit



- Create a steering committee
- Initiate a widespread discussion about inclusion
- Investigate how the school system is resourced
- Secure a cross-ministry collaboration on the welfare of all children and youth

# The steering committee



- Representatives from:
  - Three Ministries (education, health and social affairs)
  - The association of municipalities
  - Home – school parent organisation
  - Teacher union
  - Rector's association
  - Teacher education universities

# Stakeholder debate



Meetings in 18 communities around the country to discuss the audit findings and come to a consensus on how to move forward.

Discussion on:

- What does inclusive education mean in practice?
- What kind of pedagogy and practice is called for
- What are the main hindrances to the process of inclusion?
- How can we overcome the hindrances or make them neutral?

# The outcome of the meetings



Focus areas to break down barriers to inclusion:

1. Funding, working conditions, work pressure, working hours
2. Collaboration – within and outside schools, between sectors, in teams
3. Teacher education and professional development
4. Attitudes and beliefs – increase understanding of inclusive education
5. Support for teachers and consultation in schools School services
6. Aim and vision – clarify responsibilities

# A project on financing



The project concluded the following was needed:

- Review resource allocation to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different funding bodies
- Explore different funding models that shift the resource allocation focus away from individual learners
- Explore existing approaches to propose ways forward



# Then what? The prospects...



- An Education 2030 is in the pipelines – no funding has followed the implementation
- Steps have been taken in the area of education for children and youth with diverse language backgrounds
- Long waiting lists for services
  - For diagnosis
  - For behaviour or mental support
  - For speech therapy
- Need to:
  - Focus on guidance and support for teachers
  - Focus on the teacher education
  - Focus on secondary and tertiary education

# Thank you for your attention

---

Edda Óskarsdóttir – [eddao@hi.is](mailto:eddao@hi.is)