4   Discussion, Conclusions and Outlook

Before an overarching discussion of the results, we see the need to reflect on the terminology 'development' respectively 'developing'/'developed' countries, as these terms are widely used in this research report. By using the terminology a certain perspective is implied which we want to reflect on.

This discussion of the research findings in both Guatemala and Malawi therefore begins with brief notes on the use of terminology in the research report, with specific reference to the terms 'developed' and 'developing', as there is no term that is more heavily contested in the social sciences than 'development'. One of the reasons for this is that what passes as development in one cultural context could have been imposed and promoted as the 'best' way to development in other contexts. As several researchers point out (e.g. Asabere-Ameyaw, Anamuah-Mensah, Dei, & Raheem, 2014; Singal and Muthukrishna 2014; Srivastava, de Boer, & Pijl, 2014) terminology like 'developed', 'developing', 'North' and 'South' highlights the stark inequalities between countries and has become shorthand for highlighting the complex set of inequalities and dependencies between countries divided not by geographical boundaries but by fundamental economic inequality. It also needs to be pointed out that, significantly, most of the countries defined as 'developing' countries also share the legacy of a colonial past. This fundamental economic inequality between the two country groups has resulted in inequalities in the standard of living, resources available and domination by the 'developed' nations in international development.

In order to answer the research questions in this specific study, the decision to use the term 'developing' is based on the recent classification of countries according to the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (Srivastava, de Boer, & Pijl, 2014), but with the full acknowledgement that a knowledge base is emerging, which is reflexive of these deeply embedded inequalities and structural imbalances. The discussion of our research findings therefore emphasises what Singal and Muthukrishna (2014) call the powerful 'enablers' within two unique contexts, which have fostered the growth of education and enable us to begin to develop a deeper appreciation of the context and understand the individual and collective voices that we have heard. The focus is therefore on local solutions with respect to unique contexts and recognition of innovative solutions to education challenges that come from within each country.

It became clear in the study that 'developing' countries like Guatemala and Malawi cannot be assumed to be homogeneous when looking at their inner reality. Within one country or even within different regions, there are deep differences in the life conditions that people experience. This contextual characteristic, closely related to inequities, implies that inclusion can have different starting points among inhabitants and also, different faces and expectations determined by contextual and cultural factors. So, efforts toward promoting inclusive education must take into consideration a) differences among countries; and b) differences within one particular country, although common goals are expected to be accomplished.

Even though the economic, geographical and cultural conditions in Guatemala and Malawi differ, just as the contextual factors for inclusive education differ fundamentally, certain similarities in the results can be discovered and formulated as overlapping patterns. The findings and recommendations of this study cannot be generalised for all ('developing') countries. However, the

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identification of the overlapping patterns in Guatemala and Malawi can initiate a discourse about the extent to which the following aspects are applicable for other contexts as well.

1.   Close relation between poverty, inequalities, and education in developing countries

The context in both study countries is characterised by a high level of poverty and huge inequalities (e.g. rural – urban) within the population. This situation is reflected by a significant lack of financial resources in the state system and therefore in the education sector. Existing inequalities in society are reflected in the education sector with a high impact on equity and equality in education.

It became clear during the process of this study in Guatemala and Malawi that talking about inclusive education elicited ideas, values, concerns, hopes, expectations that could only be understood when considering the person in his or her inseparable relationship with the context of where he or she lives. It was also clear that inequalities explain most of the barriers for inclusion into the society as a final result of any educational effort. Furthermore, it became obvious that being excluded from educational opportunities limits possibilities of self-realisation, or being capable and positively free, in Amartya Sen's (1987) terms.

For these reasons, focusing on inclusive education brings to the fore the overwhelming complexity of inequalities in low-income countries. This enormous complexity can be expressed in exaggerated terms with the question: inclusion under what conditions and inclusion for what?

2.   Context-sensitive development of inclusive education

The results of this research show that inclusive education has to be seen in relation to the complexities of local contexts (e.g. cultural, regional). Furthermore, it becomes apparent that the participants in the research also consider inclusive education as a concept in need of local adaptation (contextualization). For instance, do the value, meaning and expectations of education vary across actors and/or levels and affect the realisation of inclusive education? Against the background of inclusive education as a broad global agenda there is a clear need to develop locally context-sensitive ways of implementing inclusive education as became evident in our findings.

3.   Clarification and mutual understanding about the concept and the scope of inclusive education

From the findings of this research it became apparent that in both countries the perception of different stakeholders and the orientation of the current educational services related to inclusive education are still closely linked to concepts of disability and special needs education, with its traditional deficits approach. Therefore educational policies and measures under the phrase inclusive education are currently still mainly pointing to children with disabilities. There is therefore a need to develop and clarify a mutual understanding of the concept of inclusive education and who else this approach should be looking to in developing countries.

Clarification is also needed when it is recognised that the notion of inclusive education carries with it socio-historical baggage related to exclusion and inequities. Despite the fact that there are some changing views in this regard and a wider view of the target group is being considered, there is a predominant preconception of inclusive education as the way in which educational systems respond to people with special needs. So, when considering 'inclusion' as a public matter in the educational

agenda, issues of exclusion, marginalisation, vulnerability and/or discriminatory relationships among citizens arise in the discourse, and other groups beside people with special needs are recognised as potential targets of inclusion. So, attention is redirected to people in these societies who have been historically excluded or discriminated against.

In conclusion, discourses and educational policies regarding disadvantaged groups in both countries mainly target specific groups (e.g. indigenous population groups, girls, children with disabilities) and are therefore fragmented. A common perspective regarding a broader understanding of inclusive education should now be developed by the relevant stakeholders in each country.

4. More coordination and collaboration between different stakeholders

As mentioned in the previous point, stakeholders, public policies and measures to provide support for disadvantaged groups in the education sector tend to be isolated in both countries. They focus their goals only on certain target groups, with the result that actions lead to fragmentation in the way the educational system functions. As the evidence points out, one possible explanation for this fact is that attention still focuses on the child and not on the system itself.

Hence, when vulnerability is the common denominator among inhabitants in 'developing' countries, it is clear that defining potential target groups one by one for inclusion could elicit more segregation for people who are less visible or who do not have the power to be represented on the policy agendas. In addition, when there are intersections in the factors causing vulnerability (i.e. indigenous girls who are over-age, living in rural areas), the definition of target groups becomes unclear and complex.

Therefore, instead of focusing on certain disadvantaged groups, it is necessary to look at the way educational systems manage diverse people, considering diversity as a natural human condition. The development of effective and regular communication, coordination and collaboration between different stakeholders in the society are required in order to improve joint efforts that go beyond educational policies and also include policies for economic and social development. Furthermore, coordination between micro-, meso- and macro-levels needs to be strengthened to achieve a coordinated approach.

5. Defining reachable goals under concrete conditions to avoid negative pressure: a tension between the international commitment toward education and the national conditions prevailing in 'developing' countries

The results in both countries show that broad (international) goals of education collide with interrelated conditions in both countries, including financial constraints and inequalities that lead to educational realities characterised by enormous gaps and lack of resources. This often leads to the frustration of stakeholders active in the implementation of educational policies and inclusive education, in particular, and produces negative pressure (Fullan, 2009) on professionals in the educational systems.

Finally, education is an international priority and for 'developing' countries like Guatemala and Malawi, international cooperation has played a key role in supporting policies and education actions for its advancement. It is also clear, however, that there is tension between international agreements

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ratified by governments and assumed as state commitments, and the time and the starting points between developed and developing countries that share the expected goals. The idea of negative pressure in Fullan´s terms (2009) refers to the fact that for 'developing' countries it seems as if they never make enough efforts to achieve the expected goals. While developing a common understanding of the concept of inclusive education (see above), reachable goals in the context of the realities of local conditions need to be developed likewise, in order to avoid negative pressure but also, keep 'developing' countries on the international developmental agenda.

6. **Improvement of teacher education in general (better qualifications for regular teachers to teach in heterogeneous groups) and more qualified teachers with special professional competences (special teachers)**

As teachers play a crucial role in implementing educational goals in the classroom, teacher education (initial as well as continuous professional development programmes) comes into the focus when the realisation of inclusive education is discussed. Significant heterogeneity (e.g. with regard to language, age, cultural background, socio-economic life conditions) in the classroom is a fact in schools in Guatemala and Malawi, and this challenges teachers on a daily basis. Teachers need to continuously address the challenges posed by heterogeneity in their classrooms, and there is the clearly expressed need to be equipped with the competencies to deal with and finally use heterogeneity in a positive way.

Moreover, there is evidence in both countries that many efforts are being undertaken to provide teachers with resources and teaching aids to handle special educational needs or vulnerable children in schools. However, these resources are not always timely or not always accessible for the whole school population, or do not respond to other needs that children or youth have. Therefore, in addition to continuous training opportunities, there is a strong need to provide a support system for teachers in their classrooms, as well as for the education community, in order to achieve quality in the educational support they provide and to promote acceptance of human diversity without any restrictions.

Additionally, more teachers specifically qualified in special needs education are needed to work with regular classroom teachers within regular schools and to support these schools with educative tools that will improve the fulfilment of the curriculum and the inclusion (not integration) of everyone in the classroom.

7. **Leadership and ownership at all levels matter for the implementation of inclusive education**

Numerous positive examples were found in the data where individuals or groups have taken the lead and developed a positive sense of ownership, coming up with spontaneous solutions in their direct sphere of influence, with the effect of supporting education for all.

This issue is considered as a great opportunity in both countries for developing and achieving inclusive educational systems. The participation of relevant stakeholders on all levels is therefore a priority for mobilising existing networks toward inclusive education for all. This also confirms that in 'developing' countries people mobilise their own resources toward purposes that are meaningful for them, like education as a common expectation. However, these efforts are limited by huge

uncovered needs associated with their limited life conditions. So leadership involves not just teachers or headmasters in the schools but also local, regional or national leaders in the society. Actions of institutional agents must favour the active participation of all the parents in the educative community.

8.   Local versions of inclusive education tend to privilege access over acceptance and participation. A pedagogy of inclusion is suggested for handling inclusive education in everyday school activities.

Remarkable achievements regarding access to education have been attained in both countries in the past years. However, it seems that measures regarding education for all still mainly focus on access. It needs to be pointed out that in a contradictory way improvements in access have partially resulted in exacerbating the situation regarding acceptance and participation. In both countries, for instance, the abolition of payments like tuition fees has resulted in a considerable increase in enrolment rates. However, it has decreased the quality of education as the education system has not reacted to higher enrolment with the provision of more and better equipped teachers and classrooms. Moreover, teachers as well as schools were not prepared to support children to stay in school, or to be able to advance at the same rhythm as other children with previous school experience or without additional duties (i.e. working children).

The evidence in this study points out that improving access to school is not enough for achieving inclusive education goals. It was confirmed in both countries that there is a need for further knowledge about how to promote acceptance and participation in the learning experiences for diverse and heterogeneous pupils/students in regular classrooms. Moreover, there is also a need to further develop notions of non-formal educational programmes for those people who cannot adjust their daily life to a rigid timetable associated with a formal modality of education, but who could benefit from non-formal educational programmes.

9.   Inclusion as part of wider strategies for development and social mobilisation

The evidence in both countries shows that there is a trust in education as a valuable resource for improving life conditions and 'becoming someone in life', as it was expressed. Moreover, the evidence also confirms that efforts for getting children into schools depend on additional actions on the side of the national States as a whole. Therefore, inclusive educational policies must be linked to policies directed towards national development, labour and social inclusion for all.

To conclude, both countries are characterised by the heterogeneity of their population as well as fundamental economic inequality. Inclusion aims at reverting inequalities and appreciating heterogeneity as a human trait. Following this perspective, existing heterogeneity in the country and therefore in the classrooms can be positively used in inclusive learning processes. This perspective was also expressed by participants in the study. However, in both countries there is a great need for methods that take advantage of the existing heterogeneity as expressed throughout by participants, ranging from national policy making level participants to teachers at school level who are implementing the curricula.

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