



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

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Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

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Three-tiered support [2]

Country	Finland
Authors of the table	<i>Kleemola, K., Toom, A., Hyytinen, H. & Tuononen, T.</i>
Name of the policy / practice	Three-Tiered Support [2]
Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice	<p>The aim of three-tiered support is that every pupil's support needs are noticed as early as possible, and they receive pedagogical or other kinds of support for their learning in school if needed. In practice, the pupils can receive general, intensified, or special support for their learning needs. All pupils are eligible for general support, initiated by teachers, tutors or parents. If the need for support is regular and continuous, intensified support is offered, and this does not respond to student's needs, special support is offered. Decisions on moving to intensified or special support are made in multiprofessional teams, including, e.g., teachers, psychologists, and the principal. Students in intensified support receive an individual learning plan, students in receive a plan for organizing individual teaching. The support is primarily provided within students' own classroom and school by a teacher, a teaching assistant, or a special education teacher, sometimes through special classes. The support can be provided for academic, emotional, or social needs. The support is always designed to respond to students' individual needs; thus, an extensive list of available supports cannot be given. However, some examples of the means of support are, e.g., flexible study groups, accommodations in exams, remedial tutoring and individual learning objectives.</p>
Target group of the policy / practice:	All students in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and basic education are eligible for support: about 30 % of pupils receive support on one of the tiers.
Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice	ECEC and basic education (primary school and lower secondary school)
Type of inequality the policy / practice tackles	Outcome: the practice is aiming to support pupils in reaching intended outcomes
Level of implementation	All levels: National level practice is applied in municipal, institutional and classroom levels
MILC dimensions	<p>Multilevel: across all levels Intersectional: does not explicitly express intersectional objectives but in practice serves students who share several vulnerabilities Life-course: supports basic education of pupils with learning challenges, which may enable them to longer educational paths</p>

Key dimensions of the identification procedure			
CONDITIONS: Foundational premise level	<i>Comprehensive</i>	The practice supports holistic understanding of education, creating learning opportunities for all individuals.	high
	<i>Coherent</i>	The practice is embedded in the Finnish education system. As all Finnish children receive same basic education (grades 1 to 9), the embedded three-tiered support is designed to help those who struggle to achieve the common objectives	high
	<i>Continuous</i>	The practice is permanent.	high
ELEMENTS: Structural level	<i>Contextual</i>	The practice allows individual implementation, considering each pupil's needs.	high
	<i>Relational</i>	The practice is adjustable to contextual resources, i.e., it is implemented with the teacher resources and financial means that are available in each municipality and school.	high
TOOLS: Action level	<i>Autonomous</i>	Teachers implement the practice autonomously in co-operation with other educational professionals and parents.	high
	<i>Reflexive</i>	The practice is adjusted locally and allows reflexive development.	high
Evidence backing the policy / practice:		<p>Research conducted in Pioneered showed that there is variation in the quality of implementation across schools and across subjects due to lack of resources. Implementation of support on two lower tiers is mostly successful in inclusion. However, highest support needs are still often offered only in special classes. While the special classes implement the national Core Curriculum of the basic education, they also segregate special need students from other children, which is against the original objective of inclusivity in the three-tiered support.</p> <p>Eklund, G., Sundqvist, C., Lindell, M., & Toppinen, H. (2021). A study of Finnish primary school teachers' experiences of their role and competences by implementing the three-tiered support. <i>European journal of special needs education</i>, 36(5), 729-742.</p> <p>Sundqvist, C., Björk-Åman, C., & Ström, K. (2019). The three-tiered support system and the special education teachers' role in Swedish-speaking schools in Finland. <i>European journal of special needs education</i>, 34(5), 601-616.</p>	

Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for learning challenges is provided inclusive in student's own school and classroom• Support is modified to each students' individual needs• Support is offered on different tiers according to each student's needs• All students in comprehensive education are eligible for general support which can be initiated by e.g., by teachers or parents
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