
PROLOGUE

EMPOWERING SCHOOLS TO CREATE NEW WAYS OF LEARNING

The idea of teaching and learning is traditionally based on a one-way activity, mainly from the teachers to the students. This is particularly true for institutional teaching and learning in any kind of formal education. Still, many teachers consider that their duty is to 'teach' which means performing different kinds of curriculum-related acts in front of the students, the learners, while the student's task is to learn, which means participating in these curriculum-based acts performed mainly by the teacher. However, a more transformative idea of teaching and learning is changing this picture rapidly. It has been concluded that in order to gain better and more effective results – and to be able to enjoy the learning process– the traditional one-way traffic of information is really not the best way to achieve them. It may be that when the students' ownership of the learning and teaching act is activated, the whole process of learning becomes more meaningful and the results are better – for all parties (including the families).

At the same time, there have been endless discussions about inclusive education, meaning that every child has a right to education, and most preferably together with other children in mainstream schools. The barriers for this kind of 'school for all' are often also historical and they are always deeply bound to the local socio-cultural context. For example, in some school systems the traditional structure of organizing the schooling separately using public vs. private school options is the main barrier: before combining these branches into a comprehensive system, the talk about gaining really inclusive schooling is somehow artificial. However, in some other school systems – which technically apply a comprehensive school system – the history of providing well-resourced specialized facilities (ie. special schools) for students with 'special learning needs' create obstacles for a change. Location is not necessarily the key focus in the inclusive education process; sometimes students may be physically included in the same place (ie. classroom), but no advanced level inclusive actions in terms of functional or social interaction are taking place. To obtain functional and social inclusion new ways of teaching and learning – preferably using tools that encourage cooperation among all students are required. This can happen anywhere, in any schools – if we want it to happen.

It is obvious, that to promote inclusive education we also need new ways of teaching and learning; we need to change the old habits and create teaching and learning which is empowering for both the teachers and students. This book is all about bringing the power to schools and bringing the option of creating new ways of learning to the field. *Reading in pairs* programme described in this book is an innovative tool for teachers, and it is based on well-established ideas of co-operative learning and peer tutoring. To create 'great schools for all', we need to focus more on how the schools are functioning and how they are inspiring teachers and students. We also need to gather scientifically solid information about the implication of our interventions. *Reading in pairs* programme is an excellent model for this kind of research-based intervention, which also gives excellent tools for classroom teachers to move away from the traditional model of teaching and get everybody working together.

*Professor Markku Jahnukainen.
Department of Teacher Education. University of Helsinki, Finland.*