Chapter 8
Inclusive Education and Families: Paradoxes, Contradictions, and Barriers

Jordi Collet, Sara Joiko, and Cecilia Simón

Abstract Informed by the educational realities of Spain and the Chile, this chapter aims to show some ambiguities and contradictions around the role of one of the key actors in inclusive education: families. Furthermore, in both countries, the participation of families has been placed in the centre of current educational policies in order to promote a school system based on equity and social justice. Specifically, we analyse how different types of families, primarily 'white middle-class families', facilitate or hinder inclusive practices, cultures and policies related to three dimensions: school choice and school segregation; relationship with "other" families, especially those with a migrant background; and, last but not least, the paradoxical role of families with regard to special education schools. In this analysis, concepts such as exclusion, meritocracy, diversity – which are all very well known in inclusive education – also become part of the narratives of families to address these three dimensions. The chapter concludes with five issues related to families that can be both a risk or an opportunity for inclusive education.

Keywords Inclusion · Families · Chile · Spain · Exclusion · Barriers

J. Collet (✉)
University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain
e-mail: jordi.collet@uvic.cat

S. Joiko
Arturo Prat University, Institute of International Studies, Iquique, Chile
e-mail: sarajoiko@unap.cl

C. Simón
Autonomous University of Madrid, Madrid, Spain
e-mail: cecilia.simon@uam.es

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Introduction

Especially since the Salamanca Statement (1994), classrooms and schools' dimensions have focused their attention and efforts on building more inclusive schools. But as we stated in chapter one, the commitment to a Global Inclusive Education Perspective allows us to introduce the dimensions of families and community as radically essential in order to move towards that goal: without (all) the families and the community, it is not possible to take steps towards the social justice that is an integral part of the inclusive school. Precisely this is the purpose of this chapter: taking advantage of research from Chile and Spain,[1] we analyse and point out some of the current contradictions and barriers faced by schools that wish to be increasingly more inclusive in the essential dimension of families and in relation to three areas: school choice and segregation; the school-family relationship, especially with those disadvantaged and "other" families with migrant background; and the paradoxical role of families with regard to special education schools. In the conclusions, some opportunities to move forward in this area are proposed.

Families in the Spanish Context: Contradictions and Transformations for Inclusive Education

Dimension 1: School Choice and School Segregation

In Spain, since the recovery of democracy in the late 1970s, there have been at least four dimensions of school segregation, and these are clearly a barrier to progress towards a more inclusive school. First, there is a dual network of schools – state schools and subsidised private schools – that, due to their ideological and religious orientation, to their cost (in the subsidised private schools, families pay for approximately a third of the cost of the student), and their location, among other factors, continue to have different student profiles. This is because, as Bonal and Zancajo (2019) explain, "economic and cultural barriers of access to private education remain obstacles for low-income and disadvantaged students" (p. 204). Following the traditional patterns of school choice, the middle classes are overrepresented in the subsidised private schools and the working classes, those with a migrant background and with children with special educational needs (SEN), are overrepresented in the state schools. Starting from this structural reality of the dual network of

[1] The comparison between Chile and Spain is justified by the diversity of their education systems. Although Chile is currently undergoing a process of social, cultural and economic transformation, for the last few decades it has been an advanced laboratory of neoliberal policies in relation to school choice, voucher policy, the treatment of families as "clients of the school", etc. Spain is still a country with a social democratic conception of education with universal access, spaces of school democracy with families and so forth.

schools, we find a second dimension of the migrant population. Thus, subsidised private schools have taken in much fewer students of foreign origin than state schools. Further, in some cases, high levels of segregation of the school network through the cultural-ethnic dimension have been created, reaching the extreme of dozens of "ghetto schools" – schools where only, or almost only, students with parents from of foreign origin are enrolled. With regard to OECD countries, Spain is the third country with most "ghettoised" schools in relation to the dimension of parent origins,[2] one of the race-specific patterns of privilege and exclusion that go largely unremarked in mainstream debates (Parker & Gillborn, 2020). Third, there is segregation by social class that overlaps and is related to the dual network and segregation by race. This is a more invisible but very widespread segregation (Alegre, 2010). The levels of school segregation by social class are very high because they are linked to residential segregation; to the complex mechanisms of school choice that the middle class dominates and uses strategically against the passive use of the working classes; and to the quasi-market context in which schools are chosen in Spain. Finally, the number of students with SEN enrolled in non-ordinary schools, that is, in special education schools, has grown in the last 10 years – a dynamic contrary to the laws in favour of inclusion promulgated since 2006 (Alcaraz & Arnaiz-Sánchez, 2019), to General comment No. 4 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) and to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The result of the four dimensions and their interactions is that in Spain "education policies have never been sufficiently developed to reduce disparities in the social composition of schools between sectors" (Bonal & Zancajo, 2019, p. 218). This casts doubt on meritocratic approaches to an educational system that, because it is segregated, cannot guarantee equity (Rendueles, 2020). Undoubtedly, the high levels of school segregation in relation to the origin and social class of families structured around the dual network, as well as the reality of students with SEN, represent a huge barrier to an inclusive system that facilitates the presence, participation and progress of all students and brings together different families in the same school context (Pujolàs, 2006). This is because school segregation, linked to the dual school network, the mechanisms of school choice, the concentration of students with SEN outside the ordinary network, among other factors, means both worse experiences and results for the most disadvantaged students (Bonal & Béllei, 2019) and the impossibility of diverse families being in the same school, living and learning together, with the loss of social capital and resources for the school and the community that this entails.

[2] https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/2021-04/AAFF_ESP_EsadeEcPol_Insight%2329_SavetheChildren_DiversidadLibertad_final.pdf

Dimension 2: The Relationship with "Other" Families

If at the education system level school segregation structurally hinders progress towards a system and schools that are inclusive, the difficulties of schools to relate in a positive and inclusive way to *all* the families is another very important barrier. The relationships between teachers and families in all their dimensions (communication, decision-making, support and so forth) are a social construction that tends to follow, according to international research, a maxim: families are a problem for the school (Joiko, 2021; Beneyto et al., 2019; Rujas, 2016; Collet et al., 2014; Kherroubi, 2008; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Vincent, 2000; Ball, 1998). From this perspective, all families are a problem for the school, but those that do not follow the "expected normality" – middle class, native, without children that have SEN – are even more so, creating once again new dimensions of inequality. First, and very clearly, the dimension of social class. Much of the research mentioned shows how schools conceive especially families that are not middle class as a problem, and their expectations, communication, daily relationships, support and so on towards them is worse. For example, research in Spain on the transition towards a post-compulsory education shows a clear social class bias in guidance since secondary compulsory education (Rujas, 2016; Tarabini, 2018). To certain groups, especially from the working class and those with a migrant background, the message that ends up being transmitted, both explicitly and implicitly, is that "school is not for you". In most cases, the bias of social class and origin act together, generating a negative prejudice from the school towards working class families and those with a migrant background and the intersection between those and other axes of inequality. Finally, the reception and integration of families with SEN children in Spanish schools appears to follow the same pattern of non-correspondence with the "expected normality". Systematically,[3] there appear cases of families for whom the ordinary school has not been inclusive; for example, where the learning and participation of their children has not been taken care of, where there has not been support or high expectations or a good reception and communication and, as we have seen, they "take refuge" in special education. Thus, to sum up, we can say that if the deep grammar (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) of the current school does not conceive all families as an inextricable part of it and include them, and if the teachers and parents do not work together for a more inclusive school, it will never be able to become truly inclusive and respond to this right of all students without exclusions.

[3] https://elpais.com/educacion/2020-11-25/la-angustia-de-las-familias-por-los-cambios-en-la-educacion-especial.html

Families and Special Education Schools

First of all, it should be noted that in the Spanish regulations in general, there is no shared, consensual and agreed upon definition regarding what inclusive education is (Petreñas et al., 2020). We still find conceptions that link it only to certain students such as those considered to have special educational needs and not to all students without exclusion. However, we can see progress around the concern for other students in situations of special vulnerability, such as those from immigrant families or with socioeconomic difficulties (Save the Children, 2018). On the other hand, we need to recognise that the advances in the right to an inclusive education are not the same throughout Spain. Ideologically, the general trend is to support inclusive education. However, the territorial structure of Spain has caused each Autonomous Community to develop its own educational policies, so that there are differences between them in terms of their implementation (conception, coherence, intensity, availability support and so forth).

With regards to the students considered to have SEN in Spain, there is a structure that the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2003) has called "multi-track"; that is, a system in which students can go to school in mainstream schools (with almost full integration in all school activities and following the school core curriculum); in 'specific classrooms' with different denominations (for students in need of ongoing educational support in some periods of their timetable combined with mainstream classes); and in special schools (for special needs education). As a result, "special education" continues to be a schooling option for certain students, which contrasts with the meaning of an inclusive education indicated by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when considering that in Spain.

"the information available reveals violations of the right to an inclusive and quality education. These violations are primarily related to certain features of the education system that have been maintained despite reforms and that continue to exclude persons with disabilities – particularly those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities or multiple disabilities – from mainstream education on the basis of assessments conducted according to the medical model of disability". (UN CRPD, 2018, p. 6)

Families, while recognising the benefits of inclusive education for the students and schools, express their concern about different related aspects, not only about learning but also their children's participation in the school. Families recognise their emotional exhaustion, the constant struggle, both before entering school, during school and their future after school. They are concerned about, among other things, the attitudes and training of the teachers, the fact that their children do not receive attention and support to maximise their learning, and the demotivation that their children may experience. The personal and social wellbeing of their children and the avoidance of situations of mistreatment among peers are of special concern, which increase in secondary education (Verdugo & Rodríguez, 2012). In addition, it is also necessary to overcome another barrier to inclusion, namely the use of a

model of psychopedagogical evaluation anchored in a traditional model (Amor et al., 2018; UN CRPD, 2018) as the teachers themselves recognise (Simón et al., 2021).

All this requires, as UNESCO (2020b) points out, important changes. Thus, for example, *Plena Inclusión*[4] (2017), in its position regarding inclusive education,[5] calls for a strategic transformation plan that includes organisations representing people with disabilities, as well as the experience that special education centres have in providing support to students with special education needs – a plan that should define what this process of transformation will be like both for the centres of special education and for ordinary schools. In addition, families want to be part of this process, not only to be informed but also to take an active part in decision-making. All this is in line with the strategies developed with families in education systems that have already been implemented in this transformation process (Echeita et al., 2021). As we can see, many challenges are still pending in order to move towards a real, everyday and effective inclusion with all families in Spain.

Families in the Chilean Context: Contradictions and Transformations for Inclusive Education

Dimension 1: School Choice and School Segregation

School choice has heavily shaped the family-school relationship in Chile. During the 80s, as part of the government's neoliberal agenda, a series of policies were established that upheld the belief that the education system would be promoted by means of both competition between schools for resources and choice of provisions for parents to decide the most appropriate setting for their child. However, as evidence suggests, the neoliberal approach only contributed to increasing school segregation (Orellana et al., 2018; Seppänen et al., 2015). Many scholars have analysed this phenomenon from various perspectives, including differences among social classes (Carrasco et al., 2015; Córdoba, 2014; Leyton & Rojas, 2017), from the perspective of migrants (Beniscelli, 2018; Córdoba et al., 2020; Joiko, 2019, 2021), indigenous people (Oyarzún et al., 2021a) and families with children with disabilities (Oyarzún et al., 2021b). However, from all these different groups of parents, segregation regarding this choice manifests itself differently.

Processes of segregation and motivations behind certain school choices happen differently for each social group. For example, studies have shown that upper and

[4] Plena Inclusión (Full Inclusion) is an associative movement that fights for the rights of people with intellectual or developmental difficulties and their families in Spain. https://www.plenainclusion.org/

[5] https://www.plenainclusion.org/publicaciones/buscador/posicionamiento-de-plena-inclusion-por-una-educacion-inclusiva-que-no-deje-a-nadie-atras/

middle-class families use choice to protect their privilege and belonging, choosing to enrol their children in private schools and therefore generating segregation of class by means of choosing not to mix their children (Gubbins, 2014; Stillerman, 2016). For others, the strategy of self-segregation aims to protect their children from racial bullying (Joiko, 2019; Moyano et al., 2020). For working-class families, however, this segregation is not so much their active option but rather because of the lack of economic capital and they feel frustrated as even though they value private education and would like their children to attend a private school, they cannot afford it (Gubbins, 2013; Hernández & Raczynski, 2015). Consequently, there is enough evidence to question the meritocracy narrative of education as school choice has become an important part of the process of formation and reproduction of class in Chile (Orellana et al., 2018) and it also shows similar dynamics to what happens in Spain, as mentioned above.

So far, we have seen that these different manifestations of segregation and their connection with the process of school choice are deeply implicated in the case for inclusive education. In this sense, the implementation of the School Inclusion Law is trying to remedy or at least appease the current cultural shift (Carrasco et al., 2019). The Law has included the principle of non-discrimination in the school admission process, establishing that schools who received public funding are allowed neither to select students nor to charge families extra fees with the aim of promoting equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of their social class, race, migration status or ability, among other social dimensions. But what happens after families have managed to find a school place? The next section aims to describe the different spaces of interaction among families inside schools and how these instances contribute, or not, of an inclusive education that places families at the center.

Dimension 2: The Relationship with "Other" Families

Even though there is a persistent emphasis on the idea that providing parents with spaces to interact is essential to create a better sense of school community and therefore work towards an inclusive education, the momentum is lost in those occasions where parents are just expected to perform as the receiver (parent meetings) and comply (school governance) with the school rules. We could contrast these passive experiences with other occasions where families – mainly from socially diverse contexts – while transferring their knowledge to the school, also influence and include other families. We must not forget, though, that occasions like meetings and school governance emerged in a complex scenario, where, as Cornejo and Rosales (2015) conclude, the school system is dominated by discriminating dispositions and normalisation which negate or resist the cultural diversity of families, "mak[ing] diversity invisible, and wast[ing] the previous learning processes that students and families have" (p. 1265). However, the dominance of neoliberalism is being increasingly challenged by families from a "non-traditional background". As Joiko (2021) shows in her study, migrant families have emerged as a valuable source of

knowledge of their cultural capital in increasingly multicultural schools. Moreover, Quilaqueo et al. (2016), after interviewing parents of indigenous communities identified as *kimches,* which in the Mapuche culture means that they are considered wise in their communities for their social, cultural and educational knowledge, concluded that *kimches-parents* have developed strategies to bridge together both "the monocultural-monolingual school curriculum and the Mapuche education" (p. 1066).

We have seen, then, that the most common spaces of families' participation (parents' meetings and school governance) are not necessarily working towards an inclusive education. However, the emergence of other spaces, mainly in the context of socially diverse families, opens up the possibility of reimagining parents' interaction with other families when their cultural capital is shared in the school community, and therefore it will allow for a more inclusive education that comes from the families themselves. Together with socially diverse families which are challenging the Chilean monocultural school system (Cortés Saavedra & Joiko, 2022), we also want to highlight the experiences of families with children with disabilities.

Families Regarding Special Education Schools

Even though the School Inclusion Law (2015) was promulgated 6 years ago, families with children with disabilities still face many barriers regarding formal education in Chile, from the process of accessing a school (Oyarzún et al., 2021a, b) to everyday practices and institutional support, such as the School Integration Programme which aims to include students with special educational needs into regular schools (Araneda-Urrutia & Infante, 2020). Moreover, Marfán et al. (2013) argued that schools which have included this programme have not yet managed to develop an inclusive education, given that there is little collaboration between the various actors in the school – staff, students and families. In this regard, according to Oyarzún et al. (2021a, b), the educational field in general becomes hostile towards these families.

The main barriers experienced by families of children with disabilities concern stigmatisation, segregation, and discrimination in schools (Lopéz et al., 2014; Villalobos-Parada et al., 2014), bringing families to denounce how schools generally "lack proper knowledge, policies, or pedagogies to receive and educate their children" (Oyarzún et al., 2021a, b). Moreover, there are limited school places in regular education for children with disabilities, and the admission process presents a series of obstacles as even though parents of children with disabilities choose for their children to be educated in regular settings, school staff advise against it based on ableist discourses (Oyarzún et al., 2021a, b). Additionally, families struggle with the demands of the national curriculum. According to the schools' perspective, learning depends on the students' disability and their family support, which reduces the responsibility of the school regarding its pedagogical function (Lopéz et al., 2014). Hence, according to Lopéz et al. (2014), a cultural barrier is created by

placing the possibilities of change outside the educational sphere, putting at risk the possibility of building an inclusive and equitable educational system.

Finally, access to educational provisions and support is granted on the basis of a medical diagnosis and an individualised educational plan which frames disability as a deficit and as an individual problem to be addressed by medical and educational experts. In other words, a medical approach to bodily diversity frames behaviours and bodies that are non-functional to schools as pathological (Ceardi et al., 2016). Therefore, given that the medical model of disability is dominant in Chile, children with disabilities are made to fit in an educational system that is highly performative (Oyarzún et al., 2021a, b) as part of a neoliberal-ableist agenda in education (Araneda-Urrutia & Infante, 2020).

All of these barriers mean that families with disabled children face a school system whose aim is to homogenise students based on the idea of normality (Apablaza, 2015; Infante et al., 2011). Therefore, students with disabilities will always be labelled as "different", no matter what.[6] Thus, instead of acknowledging this difference to reimagine a different school experience (Infante & Matus, 2009) – which should be the goal of inclusive education – disability educational policies in Chile aim to include children with disabilities in schools with structures, practices and discourses that do not consider students with disabilities and their families.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As has been stated in previous chapters, to speak of inclusive education is to speak of a right of all students (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020; UNESCO, 2014) – a right that, when it is exercised, involves significant benefits for all students, their families and the teachers, as well as for society as a whole (Kefallinou et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020a). However, as we have already gathered from international research and is stated in the analysis carried out by UNESCO (2020a), the great distance that still needs to be travelled to achieve this objective is striking, as are the changes that are urgently required to meet this unavoidable international challenge. Among them, UNESCO explicitly points to the need to involve the various families in this process, as well as to promote dialogue with all of them both inside and outside the school, taking into account their different voices. The results of UNESCO's analysis indicate, in the same vein as what we have expounded in the cases of Spain and Chile, that so far this reality does not predominate and places the different families, their diversities, (in)equalities and voices are seen more as a problem than a solution; more as an excluded actor than included; more as an agent to "normalise" and "discipline" than as an essential voice required to advance towards a horizon of policies, cultures and practices that are real, effective

[6] A similar experience to migrant families, as they are labelled as the constant "others" in Chilean schools (Cortés Saavedra & Joiko, 2022).

and quotidian. Because as we defend in the book, a real and Global Inclusive Education cannot be understood or practised without the participation of all families, who are necessary assets in the transformation process, both of the education system in general and of each school in particular (UNESCO, 2014 and 2020b; Echeita et al., 2021). It is precisely for this reason that UNESCO (2020b), and in close relation with ODS 4, includes among the six actions that it recommends undertaking in order to progress towards greater inclusion that of "[i]nvolv[ing] communities in the development and implementation of policies that promote inclusion and equity in Education" (p. 35). And it asserts something that we are in full agreement with: "Particularly crucial is the engagement of families"; which is something that Ainscow also highlights when recommending that "Forming partnerships amongst key stakeholders such as parents/caregivers who can support the process of change is therefore essential" (Ainscow, 2020, p. 128). But as we have seen, the current role of families in Spain and Chile with regard to inclusive education still remains that of an external agent and excluded from the daily dynamics of the school. An agent that is often without voice and, especially for those families that do not correspond to the "expected normality" for the school (middle class, native, without children with SEN), an agent to be disciplined (Collet & Olmedo, 2021). How can these segregating and exclusive dynamics of the education system and of each school in relation to the diverse and unequal families be overcome?

First, it is essential see *all* families as structural, necessary, essential and equal members of a work team that places their children/students at the centre of their concern. Thus, schools must build spaces for mutual listening and active participation within the framework of a democratic model of relationships between teachers and all families – especially with those furthest from "school normality" (working class, migrant origin, with children with SEN) (Collet et al., 2014). Second, as Simón and Barrios (2019) point out, schools must be concerned about getting to know their families and the school environment, their needs and interests, supporting them and empowering them through recognition (Turnbull et al., 2006); and also recognise, value and appreciate the diversity of families in the school as an asset for the school. Diverse families are always part of the solution to move towards a more inclusive, equitable and just school; and policies to combat segregation by class, origin or SEN must contribute in a key way to this objective. Third, in situations dominated by barriers to inclusion such as the lack of trust, isolation or conflict, the school itself must contribute to strengthening these weaknesses and creating support networks (Ainscow, 2020). It also needs to generate meeting spaces between families, and between the different families and the teachers in assemblies, dialogues or work commissions, in order to respond jointly and cooperatively to the needs of the school, students and families (Sabando & Jardí, 2019). Finally, it is important to understand that if the schools have not diverse families and this diversity is not seen, conceived and practised as a normal and positive element, an inclusive, equitable and just system or school are not possible. Thus, all the actors and voices in the schools need to co-construct together a culture and supportive practices that increase their capacity to respond with equity to the diversity of the students (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). And here, all the families and their knowledge,

relationships, and wisdom are a fundamental resource for this challenge (Puigdellívol et al., 2019) – both for the identification of the barriers and in their role as facilitators that mediate the presence, learning and participation of certain students, as well as in the planning and implementation processes of initiatives for school improvement and innovation (Simón & Barrios, 2019).

In short, all the above should inspire policy-makers, teachers, and schools concerned about inclusion to review their barriers related to families and their diversities and inequalities. These barriers include school choice mechanisms that facilitate the dynamics of school segregation; the lack of awareness and support that facilitate concentration of SEN students outside ordinary classrooms; negative conceptions about all or some families, understood as a problem and not as an agent and a resource; the role that they must play in the school, seeing them as clients instead of co-responsible members; the type of relationships that the teachers establish with them, which is often one-way instead of a collaboration based on trust; the areas of participation that are made available to them, often conceiving families as mere recipients of decisions; and the responsibility of the school with respect to the families, treating them as external to it instead of promoting their structural and normalised inclusion as well their empowerment. As UNESCO (2020b) states: "In some countries, parents and education authorities already cooperate closely in developing community-based programmes for certain groups of learners, such as those who are excluded because of their gender, social status or disability" (p. 35). Thus, the challenge for educational policies, culture and practices is clear: "A logical next step is for these parents to become involved in supporting change for developing inclusion in schools". Without all the families, a real, effective and Global Inclusion Education is not possible.

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