



Group Discussion Summary

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Topic: “Accommodating Students' Needs in IEA Assessments”

- How difficult is it to implement definitions and criteria, especially in relation to special education needs and limited language ability?
- How have approaches to inclusion and student participation developed in your country in recent years?
- What challenges do you currently experience when applying IEA definitions and exclusion criteria in your country?
- What changes or support would better meet your country's needs in future IEA studies?

Overall observations

There was broad support for enabling as many students as possible to participate, where appropriate support is available

Inclusiveness was generally viewed as an important guiding principle for both current and future studies

Education systems are becoming more inclusive, with more students with additional needs in mainstream classrooms

Countries differ substantially in SEN definitions, language contexts, resources and accommodations

The challenge is to increase inclusion while maintaining validity, representativeness and comparability

Key concerns

- **Definitions and exclusion criteria are not always interpreted consistently**, either across countries or between schools within the same country.
- National definitions of special educational needs and existing accommodations do not always **align easily with IEA criteria and procedures**.
- Students who could participate with appropriate support may be **excluded because the necessary accommodations are unavailable or unclear**.
- Differences in **resources, technology and school capacity** affect which students can realistically be accommodated.
- Countries remain concerned about balancing **greater inclusion with comparability, representativeness and student wellbeing**.

Language emerged as a particular challenge

- Limited language ability is difficult to define and apply consistently
- Limited language ability was repeatedly raised as an important exclusion challenge
- Particularly relevant for recent immigrants, refugees, and multilingual education systems
- Countries differ in how long students need to be in the system before participation is expected
- Risk of excluding students who could participate despite limited proficiency
- The challenges to providing assessments in multiple languages were also raised

Proposed solutions and ways forward

Clearer operational guidance

- Concrete examples and borderline cases
- FAQs and simpler instructions
- Clearer interpretation of exclusion categories

Clearer accommodation guidance (e.g., toolkit)

- What is permitted, for whom, under what circumstances?
- Where possible, consider accommodations students normally use in class

More flexible assessment

- Shorter instruments/questionnaires
- Breaks and flexible timing

- Adaptive approaches
- Reduced unnecessary reading load if not the construct

Capacity building

- Guidance for NRCs, coordinators, principals and teachers
- Greater exchange across countries

Better evidence

- More analysis of who is excluded, why, and the impact on results



Thank you!

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