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ECONOMIC WELLBEING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES IN FRANCE AND THE UK

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ABSTRACT

The conclusions of an OECD report published in 2015 suggest that France has to be more effective in its educational inclusion policies to comply with the requirements of the Constitution of the World Health Organization, adopted as early as 1946.

This paper begins by scrutinising the diverse meanings of inclusive education and related policies implemented in the United Kingdom and France through a comparative analysis of the recent literature and the various definitions, laws and best practices of inclusive education. The central aim is to find the links between inclusion and economic wellbeing in the economic, social and cultural contexts of the two countries.

The second part analyses the various policies implemented recently to determine the main characteristics, the differences and the similarities, and the economic challenges in terms of wellbeing. The final goal is to discover how to improve inclusion and wellbeing in both countries.

Keywords: Inclusive education / economic wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a broader research project that began in 2012, comparing economic wellbeing definition and measure in France and the UK. After having worked on measuring subjective wellbeing in the workplace and its impact on people's health, a new question appeared regarding the extent to which disabled people's wellbeing was measured and taken into consideration. The study of inclusive education thus appeared as the first necessary step in this comparative study. Even if inclusive education deals with other categories than disabled persons, the aim of this article is to focus on this specific group to study how disabled people can be included in society as a whole, and how they can gain access to our economic system and to economic wellbeing.

The central issue will therefore be to identify how inclusion and economic wellbeing are linked by adopting a comparative perspective between the French and British cultural contexts. To answer this question, a semantic approach was chosen, which led to the analysis of the different discourses about inclusion in the two countries. The meanings of the main terms used were compared, as well as the various contexts in which they were used. The different regulations under which they operated were then scrutinised. Finally, the need to assess the subjective wellbeing of children with special educational needs was examined in the perspective of the results of a recent broader survey carried out in the workplace.

FRENCH AND BRITISH MODELS OF INCLUSION

Inclusion: Perspectives and Cultural Contexts

Inclusion, Integration, Exclusion

It is interesting to notice that the French term has been translated directly from the English: "*inclusive education*". Plaisance et al. (2007, p. 159) make the following comment:

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“Inclusion is rarely used in French to refer to processes involving individuals. On the contrary, in English it is often matched with the expression “inclusive education”, which is more and more used by the international organisations.”²

It seems that the meaning of the term and the way it is used varies in the two countries. Inclusion tends to be associated with education referring to educational organisations in the UK; in France, in contrast, inclusion is more linked to the individual’s rights and his social status.

In the UK, for Ainscow (2005, p. 14) “there is still considerable confusion about what inclusion actually means”, and the source of this confusion may be the fact that central government policy statements refer to different notions. For instance, “‘Social inclusion’ has been associated mainly with improving attendance and reducing exclusion from schools”. On the other hand, “inclusive education” is mentioned in national guidance literature and refers to the rights of children with special educational needs to be educated in mainstream schools. Finally, Ofsted, the British inspection agency, has coined the expression “educational inclusion”, “noting that ‘effective schools are inclusive schools’” (Ainscow, 2005, p. 14). A 2001 report for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) on inclusive schooling also mentioned the development of “effective inclusion” as one of its “key principles” (LEA, 2001, p. 2).

To clarify the notion of inclusion, therefore, Ainscow decided to refer to the LEA definition. This may differ from one local context to another, but there are some common features: inclusion is a never-ending “process” to find better solutions to respond to diversity; inclusion is “concerned with the identification and removal of barriers”; and inclusion is “about the presence, participation and achievement” of all children.

Social and Educational Inclusion vs. Integration

According to Plaisance et al. (2007), the terms “inclusion” and “inclusive education” in France are often understood as welcoming structures and practices which would simply put disabled pupils within ordinary school backgrounds without any reflection on the necessary conditions required to achieve this. They usually refer to “a school for all”.³ In the United Kingdom, the term “integration” is usually used to speak about this mere physical attendance, whereas the term “inclusion” implies a full and total sense of belonging to the school community. Furthermore, in the countries which have adopted the “inclusion” terminology, such as the United Kingdom, some practices seem closer to integration (Plaisance et al., 2007, p. 159–160).

The meaning of “inclusion” differs depending on the angle of approach: whether you are a parent, a teacher, a disabled child, the government, or an organisation. And the goals of each of these parties may sometimes be contradictory. Some parents want their child to go to a mainstream school, while others prefer to send them to special institutions.

The development of inclusive education which appeared in the 1980s became an opportunity to put aside the “essentialist perspectives which defined [before the 1960s and 1970s] social inclusion difficulties caused by disability as a problem or a deficit rooted in the individuals: disabled children then found themselves in a situation where they were excluded from any kind of social life” (Bélanger, 2010). With inclusive education, “the difficulties do not come from the individual anymore, but they must be understood according to the situation, in the interaction located in a very precise context”. For Plaisance et al. (2007, p. 160), the notion of an inclusive school is first and foremost based on an ethical principle: that of the right for any child, whoever he is, to go to an ordinary school. Inclusion thus has to be understood as the opposite of exclusion, or the act of setting apart some categories of children depending on their characteristics.

² In French, « Le vocabulaire de l’inclusion n’est guère utilisé en français pour désigner des processus concernant des personnes. Il est au contraire courant en langue anglaise, souvent couplé à l’expression éducation inclusive, de plus en plus adoptée dans les organismes internationaux. »

³ “L’école pour tous”.

In the UK, “disabled children” are now referred to as “children with Special Educational Needs”, a much wider group that also includes such categories as migrant children. Here, what Michael Oliver calls “the role of language” plays a major role (Oliver, 1996, p. 31). It was the 1978 Warnock Committee that chose to adopt the term “Special Educational Needs, or SEN for short” as a generic description of all forms of learning disability. In 2005, Lady Warnock herself criticised this change:

The idea of transforming talk of disability into talk of what children need has turned out to be a baneful one. If children’s needs are to be assessed by public discussion and met by public expenditure, it is absolutely necessary to have ways of identifying not only what is needed but also why (by virtue of what condition or disability) it is needed ... the failure to distinguish various kinds of need has been disastrous for many children (Warnock, 2005, p. 20).

We may also take the example extracted from a questionnaire issued by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. Instead of the question “Do you have any scars, abnormalities or deformities which restrict your daily activities?”, the authors decided to rephrase it as “To what extent does other people’s reactions to your scars, abnormalities or deformities restrict your daily activities?” (Oliver, 1990 quoted in French by Bélanger, 2010). Inclusion is an invitation to change our perspective, our vision and the way we look at other people as well as ourselves.

The school’s institutional context with its norms and expectations sometimes prevents us from changing our perspectives and angles of approach. For instance, when a classroom for autistic pupils was opened in a private Parisian school, the new pupils were only accepted for a “renewable one-year trial period”. The reason given for this was the will of the school management team not to disappoint parents and also to be sure to get full support from the teachers by leaving the choice with the educating team and not to decide for them, as is often the case in French public schools (Bélanger et al., 2010, p. 73). In the United Kingdom, the highly competitive context at school may also be an obstacle to inclusion. For Nathalie Belanger, a Canadian researcher, integration is more common in France and is defined as follows:

Integration aims at finding the best place for a pupil with special needs and takes for granted the fact that he is responsible for the problem, whereas inclusion’s goal, at least theoretically, is to question and redesign all the school facilities so that all the pupils may have the optimal learning and recognition conditions (Bélanger et al., 2010, p. 73).

Different visions of inclusion exist in France and in the United Kingdom. In France, the main idea is to include so as not to exclude, and integration is more referred to in the official discourse as well as the child’s individual rights. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, we find many different references to inclusion which sometimes do not correspond to the same notion. The vision of inclusion is blurred by a variety of names and interpretations. In both countries, however, inclusion implies a necessary reflection on the way school is organised. With the intention of getting a clearer picture of inclusion in each country, we will begin a comparative survey of its definitions.

A Comparative Study of the Definitions of Inclusion

Here are two French definitions for the notion of inclusion. The first comes from a dictionary of education and training:

The term “inclusion” refers to the assertion of the rights of any person to gain access to the different common institutions intended for all, whatever their potential peculiarities may be. The expression “educational inclusion” also applies to all children, and more particularly to those who are handicapped or who have “special educational needs”, and who are considered

as having the right to go to the school of the place they live in, and even to mainstream school, and to take part, in the same way as others in educational activities (Champy et al., 2005).

It is interesting to note a reference to inclusion as a right in this definition, and also to “special educational needs” which imply the possibility of attending a special school as “a right to an education which answers the specific needs of handicapped children and youngsters” (Zay, 2012a). This definition summarises the French view on the meaning of this notion and is consistent with the previous one.

The first British definition was taken from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), whose role is to assess schools:

OFSTED defines an educationally inclusive school as ‘one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter.’ In order for a school to be satisfactory or better, it must be, “inclusive in its policies, outlook and practices”. OFSTED inspections also assess how well a school reaches out to all its learners and the practical steps schools are taking in and out of the classroom in order to take account of pupils’ varied life experiences and needs (DfES, 2001, p. 5).

The second definition is part of an index:

Inclusion involves change. It is an unending process of increasing learning and participation for all students. It is an ideal to which schools can aspire but which is never fully reached. But inclusion happens as soon as the process of increasing participation is started. An inclusive school is one that is on the move (Booth et al., 2002, p. 3).

The last definition is also part of a paper:

Inclusion is right for most children but not all. Some children’s needs are so specific that catering for them in a mainstream setting would be difficult. Inclusion is ideal when both parents and practitioners are fully aware of the disabled child’s needs and are able to provide the support and resources to meet these needs. The needs of the child are paramount – whatever the policy (Nutbrown et al., 2005).

All these definitions come from researchers in France and in the United Kingdom, except for the OFSTED definition, which comes from an institution. They portray different interpretations. The French ones focus more on children’s rights and the need to answer their “specific” educational needs, whereas the British definitions highlight the need for special educational “practices” and the fact that inclusion is a “process of change” that impacts the whole educational system, and totally denies the fact that it is a right for all. Only one of the British definitions mentions the necessity of taking the child’s wellbeing into consideration when measuring inclusion. Inclusion is considered as a model, an ideal to be reached. The UK schools’ mission is to implement educational practices and use all their resources to answer children’s special educational needs and improve their wellbeing. In France, mainstream education for all is the main objective of inclusion; conversely, in the United Kingdom, inclusion is considered as a choice will consider the choice between a mainstream and a special school, depending on the specific needs and wellbeing of each child.

A Question of Principles

The study of the founding principles of inclusive education will enable us to better understand the differences in the way inclusion is understood in the United Kingdom. They can be found in the documents of the Department for Education published for the implementation of the 2001 Act:

Principles of an inclusive education service

Inclusion is a process by which schools, local education authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include pupils.

With the right training, strategies and support nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education.

An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and incorporates the views of parents and children. The interests of all pupils must be safeguarded.

Schools, local education authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.

All children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.

Mainstream education will not always be right for every child all of the time. Equally just because mainstream education may not be right at a particular stage it does not prevent the child from being included successfully at a later stage (DfES, 2001, p. 2).

These principles underline the fact that the goal of an inclusive educational policy is to enable all children to “have access” to education and training. They focus on the strategy of the educational policy and specify that mainstream education will be suitable for “nearly” all children with SEN. On the other hand, in France, inclusive education is seen as the universal right to go to mainstream school. The process is more likely to be grounded in legislation and it is the whole educational system which has to be changed (Zay, 2012, p. 3). Children are considered as being “all able” according to the “principle of everyone being educable” (Zay, 2012, p. 4).

In the United Kingdom, probably under the influence of the neo-liberal model of capitalism, the individual and specific dimension is more significant than the legal one. This model is ruled by the search for added value, short-term profit, and individual success, and favours competition.

What About Wellbeing?

The link between inclusive education and wellbeing also has to be explained. As we saw in its definition, the goal of inclusion is to secure and guarantee the wellbeing of children with SEN, and at the same time meet their educational needs. This was clearly mentioned in OFSTED’s definition mentioned previously.

An accurate definition of economic wellbeing was put forward by Alfred Marshall:

Political Economy or Economics is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of wellbeing... Thus it is on the one side a study of wealth; and on the other, and more important side, a part of the study of man (Marshall, 1890, p. 1.1.1).

There is a clear reference to humanism in “the study of man”, and economics has to take into account “the material requisites of wellbeing” as one of its main objectives. Inclusion is part and parcel of the study of man, and its goal is to increase the wellbeing of handicapped children.

Economic wellbeing is still in the process of being defined (Coron, 2017, p. 69). However, a report from the WHO provides interesting elements for analysing wellbeing, in a comparative perspective, in France and Great Britain. It does not mention any precise social, cultural or economic definition, but rather suggests the following framework: “Well-being exists in two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises an individual’s experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values” (WHO, 2013, p. 3). One of inclusive education’s goals should thus be to enhance both children’s objective and subjective wellbeing.

Inclusive Educational Policies

Regulation

In France

In 2002, Jacques Chirac decided to make the social inclusion of handicapped persons one of the three priorities of his term as French president. This action showed a desire to reinforce national cohesion and bring more justice to care more for the most vulnerable ones. Three years later, an Act was passed on 11 February 2005 aiming at promoting the equality of rights, opportunities, participation and citizenship of handicapped persons. It focused on the right of all to participate in mainstream education to experience continuous and appropriate learning. This inclusive policy was articulated around the development of the following actions: improving accessibility in all fields of social life (education, employment, transport, etc.), the right to receive a compensation for all the expenses resulting from the consequences of their handicapped situation, and the development of participation and proximity thanks to the creation of the “*Maisons Départementales des Personnes Handicapées*” (M.D.P.H).⁴

In the United Kingdom

In 1993, section 160 of the Education Act (and later section 316 of the 1996 Education Act) ratified the fact that children with special educational needs must attend mainstream education if their parents wish it. The difference between this and the French regulation is that the decision is left to the parents. Furthermore, official documents in the UK often denounce the ability of mainstream educational institutions to satisfy these special needs.

In 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act tried to prevent discrimination at work with an attempt to define this notion.

In 1997, the British government published a report entitled *Excellence for All: Meeting Special Educational Needs*, which started developing educational inclusion via special schools. Then, in 1999, came the publication of the report *From Exclusion to Inclusion*, recalling the “strengthened right for parents of children with statements of special educational needs to a place at a mainstream school” (see section 324 of the 1996 Education Act).

The 2001, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act set up inclusion both in mainstream education and special schools depending on the parents’ wishes. Finally, on 1 October 2010, the Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. It consolidated this legislation and also provided some changes that schools needed to be aware of, although it dealt more with discrimination than with educational inclusion.

The study of all these regulations in the two countries confirms the previous conclusions regarding the prominence of the legal dimension of inclusion in France, and the insistence on the freedom to choose between mainstream and special schools in the United Kingdom.

The Various Educational Practices

The United Kingdom implemented differentiated learning and educational practices, such as setting targets to be reached by pupils that were adapted to pupils’ abilities, which made it possible to reduce the very competitive context of the British educational system (Coron, 2016, p. 9). As in France, a tracking of educational blockage and difficulties was also set up that requires attentive listening to identify the needs and communicate efficiently (DfES, 2001, p. 6).

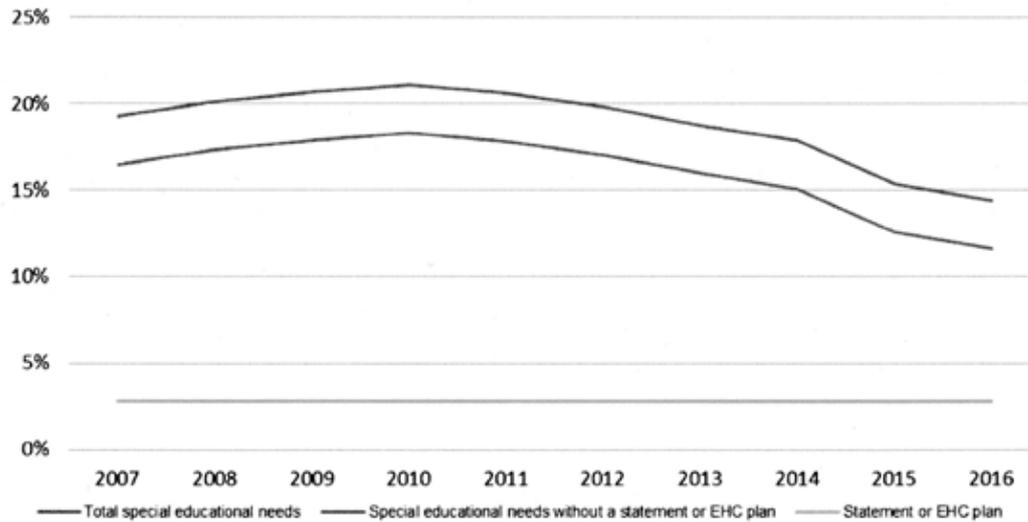
⁴ “Regional Houses for Handicapped Persons”.

The Impact of the Policies

The Evolution of the Number of Children with SEN Educated at School

The following graph, taken from the 2007–2016 school census, provides a quantitative assessment of British inclusive educational policies by measuring the evolution of the percentage of students with special educational needs over the period:

Graph 1. Number of pupils with SEN (2007–2016)



Source: school census 2007-2016 (as at January each year)

Source: DfE, 2016, p. 5

The number of pupils with SEN has considerably decreased in the United Kingdom. It went down from 18.3% in 2010 to 11.6% in 2016. Interestingly, there is no explanation for this decrease in the official comments on governmental statistics. This decrease could show the failure of inclusive education policies in the United Kingdom, even if the percentage of the number of children detected and accompanied remained stable at 2.8%.

On the contrary, in France there was a 25% increase in the number of children with SEN educated in mainstream schools from 2002 and 2016, and a 50% increase in the number of accompanying staff during the same period (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2016).

Percentage of pupils by school type

These remarks are confirmed by the following table, which presents the percentages of pupils by school type, introducing a difference between state-funded and special schools.

Table 1. Percentage of pupils with a statement or EHC plan by type of provision (England 2010–2016)

School type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maintained nursery	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
State-funded primary	25.8	25.8	25.9	26.0	26.2	26.2	25.5
State-funded secondary	28.8	28.4	27.7	26.9	25.7	24.6	23.5
Maintained special	38.2	38.7	39.0	39.6	40.5	41.4	42.9
Pupil Referral Units	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Independent	4.2	4.3	4.7	4.9	5.1	5.3	5.7
Non-maintained special	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6

Source: School census 2010-2016 (as at January each year)

Source: DfE, 2016: 6

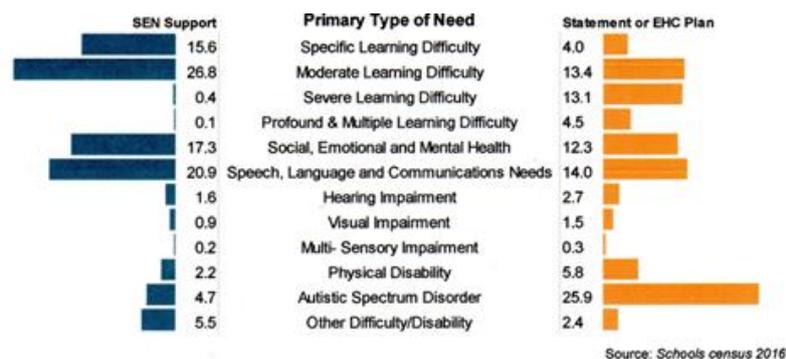
The figures show an increase in the number of pupils attending maintained special schools from 38.2% in 2010 to 42.9% in 2016. The percentage remained stable for state-funded

primary schools, but decreased for state-funded secondary schools. The overall trend seems to be more favourable to special schools, which again may be a sign of a failure of the United Kingdom's inclusive educational policies.

The different types of needs

This last chart presents the percentage of pupils with each primary type of need, who are either on SEN support or have a statement or EHC plan in a state-funded primary, secondary or special schools in England in 2016.

Chart 1. Percentage of pupils with each primary type of need



Source: DfE, 2016, p. 6

Pupils who receive SEN support (in blue on the chart) usually have moderate learning difficulties. 26.8% belong to the “moderate learning category”, and 20.9% have speech, language and communication needs. Those benefitting from a statement or EHC plan have more severe learning difficulties than those with SEN support: 25.9% have autistic spectrum disorder and 13% have a severe learning difficulty. On the whole, this chart shows that most pupils with severe learning difficulties (including nearly three quarters of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders) do not attend primary or secondary mainstream schools. In France, the majority of pupils with SEN attending mainstream school have cognitive function troubles (45%), and only 2% of pupils with visual troubles are included in the educational system (Blanc, 2011, p. 14). The two situations are difficult to compare, because the British have a learning classification while the French class by pathology.

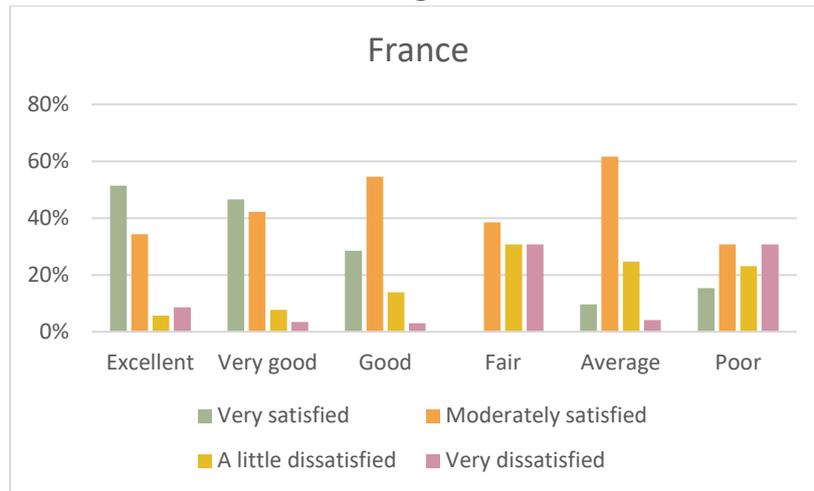
According to the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), inclusion policies for children with SEN began in the 1980s, and different successive governments have been criticised for “inadequately resourcing this policy, for lack of political will to enforce it and for maintaining a legal framework which renders inclusive education inaccessible to some learners” (CSIE, 2015).

In both countries, the development of inclusive education is slowed down by the fact that most schools do not have the trained teachers, structure and equipment to take care of children with SEN. The subjective wellbeing of children with SEN is very often forgotten: they have to manage with the stress caused by mainstream or specialised schools, which can decrease their level of wellbeing. A very interesting empirical survey would be to measure and compare the level of subjective wellbeing in each type of school.

Perspectives for Further Research: Measuring the Impact of Health on Wellbeing

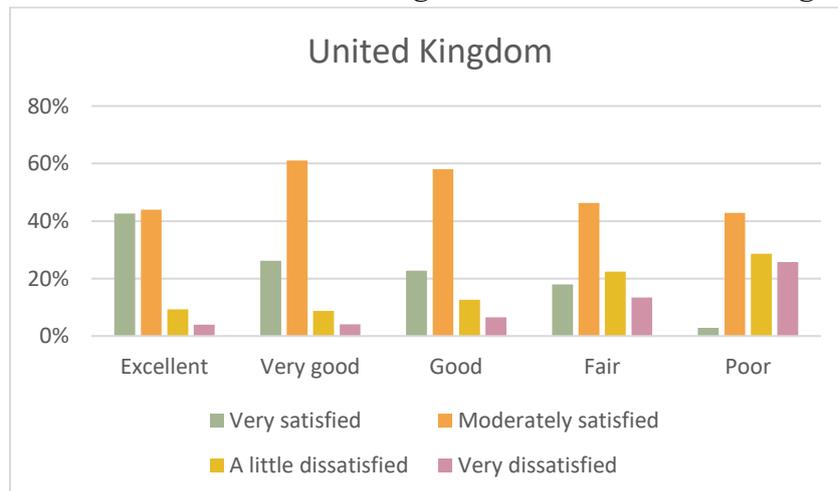
The need for this empirical approach is confirmed by the findings of another empirical study trying to measure wellbeing at work, and more particularly the impact of health and stress levels on work satisfaction. What is true for workers with no handicap will be even more accurate for handicapped workers. In the 2014 survey, the chi2 statistical tests we conducted have revealed that wellbeing at work highly depends upon a worker's health or stress levels. And so, the results of a survey measuring subjective wellbeing could give an indication of its level for children with SEN at school.

Table 1. Health and Wellbeing at Work in France



Source: Survey carried out in 2014 by Catherine Coron and Louise Dalingwater
Statistical exploitation by Jean-Luc Coron

Table 2. Health and Wellbeing at Work in the United Kingdom



Source: Survey carried out in 2014 by Catherine Coron and Louise Dalingwater
Statistical exploitation by Jean-Luc Coron

CONCLUSION

Theoretically, the notion of educational inclusion may differ depending on its social, political, economic and cultural context and the angle from which it is studied.

This paper has highlighted the existence of two different understandings of inclusive education in France and in the United Kingdom, as well as an apparent policy failure in Britain, where the number of children with SEN has decreased from 2007 to 2016, while it has increased in France.

However, the level of wellbeing of pupils with SEN's is only considered as an essential element of inclusive education in the United Kingdom. As inclusive education may be perceived as constraining by the pupils, this paper has shown the need for an empirical study to measure the subjective wellbeing of pupils at school and improve its development. This could help the expansion of inclusive education in the United Kingdom.

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