



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY: A PRACTICE FOR ALL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Inclusion is an approach and procedure with philosophical, political, educational and social dimensions. The aim of inclusive education is to eliminate school and social exclusion. The framework places schools at the centre of inclusive education. In this context, inclusive pedagogy refers to the ways that courses, classroom activities, curricula, and assessments consider issues of diversity in an effort to engage all students in learning that is meaningful, relevant, and accessible. This article constitutes a literature review and the purpose is to offer a pedagogical conceptual and applied for status on inclusive education and teaching. The paper is organised in a brief description of the historical events, new trends and a discussion of the current situation for pedagogical processes and actions that contribute to ensuring the success of all the students. The overall approach of the paper is to contribute to the on-going debate on the current description and value of inclusive education and pedagogy with emphasis on the social model of disability and human rights.

Keywords: inclusion, inclusive education and pedagogy, education for all, inclusive culture, inclusive teaching and best practices, special needs, human rights, inclusive schools

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1. Introduction

Today, the debate on the modern school responds to the social challenges of the 21st century and places the school as a factor of education, social and school inclusion and culture (Malafantis, 2022). Inclusive education as a late modernity reform project is exemplified in the call for 'Education for All' (Armstrong et al., 2011). Especially, inclusive education was originally developed for younger students (Moriña, 2017) and for all learners in the community. Also, inclusive education is increasingly promoted and supported, not just by a few passionate individuals and groups, but by UN agencies and governments globally (Stubbs, 2008). Thus, inclusion is in public discourse with philosophical, political, educational and social dimensions (Daniels & Garner, 1999). Inclusion is linked to the quality of education systems, school practices and teaching effectiveness to the human rights of all citizens worldwide (Corbett, 2001/ Degener, 2016) as well as the boundaries or barriers that make schools inclusive (Evans & Lunt, 2002/ Hedegaard Hansen, 2012).

In general, inclusion is the key to the equal realization of the right of all people to effective education. Inclusion helps build societies with fewer inequalities (<https://www.paratiritirioanapirias.gr/storage/app/uploads/public/5f8/6a9/a04/5f86a9a045b5f058455771.pdf>), because all educational options are in harmony with the basic principle of equality of opportunity. So, inclusive education as the goal of the 21st century can promote individual development as well as the development between groups and nations. Overall, inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 2016/ Deppeler et al., 2010 / Idol, 2006) is a particular challenge for schools and teachers to provide equal opportunities for all their students (Angelides, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to offer a pedagogical conceptual and applied for status on inclusive education. The paper is organised in a brief description of the historical and new trends and a discussion of the current situation for pedagogical processes and actions that contribute to ensuring the success of all the students.

The value of the study is the contribution to the foundation of an Inclusive Pedagogy, where the promotion of inclusion as a dominant philosophy in general and special education presupposes the development of inclusive practices. The literature review is conducted to highlight key pedagogical points and to describe pedagogical principles and considerations that improve learning in the classroom. Such reviews can be useful in training and upskilling (Creswell, 2016 / Avramidis & Kalyva, 2006).

2. Inclusive education: historical events and new trends

In recent decades, global initiatives and international declarations emphasize the rights of all children and their education in a common School for All, implementing the "Education for All" movement (The UNESCO Salamanca Statement, 1994/ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989/ <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/improve-learning/disability-inclusive-education-and-learning>). Since 1990, global attention has been given to

education as a human right through the initiative Education for All (EFA). The goals EFA and its related international agreements have built a political framework for pressing governments to increase universal childhood education, literacy, equity, etc. (Gabel & Danforth, 2008).

Especially, the World Conference on Special Needs Education was co-organized by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Science of Spain, and held in the city of Salamanca. It led to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, arguably the most significant international document that has ever appeared in the field of special education. In so doing, it endorsed the idea of inclusive education, which was to become a major influence in subsequent years. The move toward inclusive schools can be justified on a number of grounds, such as an educational justification, a social justification and an economic justification (Ainscow et al., 2019).

According to J. Delors, education should not become a reason for exclusion. Education must be at the center of personal and community development. The mission of education is to give everyone without exception the opportunity to achieve goals. Education should be a social experience through which children will learn about themselves, acquire knowledge and develop interpersonal skills. Moreover, lifelong learning will be a continuous process of shaping people and their ability to judge and act collectively. In this perspective, lifelong learning for all and School for all take place. This fact responds to the need for planning and building a common future for all citizens of the world (Mavroidis, 2004, pp. 458-459). So, according to Nilholm (2021), the concept of inclusion includes all students, because all students should participate socially and learn according to their abilities.

3. Inclusive education: challenges and opportunities

The framework places schools at the centre of inclusive education (Ainscow, 2005), because developing the potential of schools and combating school failure are key factors for inclusive education systems (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020). The inclusion of students with special educational needs and inclusive classes are trends in modern education in all contexts and levels (O'Donnell et al., 2021, p. 601).

The practice of inclusive education gets increasingly obvious in gaining more support and interest in the education system in almost all countries in the world (Suleymanov, 2015). According to Dreyer (2016), "*inclusive education focuses on inclusion in education and educational institutions*". The aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society (Ainscow & César, 2006). So, «definitions of 'inclusion' and 'inclusive education', then, have moved away from a specific focus on disability towards a broader view that encompasses students from minority ethnic or linguistic groups, from economically disadvantaged homes, or who are frequently absent or at risk of exclusion. 'Inclusive education' has come to mean the provision of a framework within which *all* children – whatever their ability, gender, language, ethnic or

cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with real learning opportunities. Inclusive education is about participation and equal opportunity for all – in other words, ‘full membership’ of school and, later, society. Such a view of inclusion presents a challenge to existing structures and systems that have themselves contributed to the barriers that learners experience» (“Inclusive education: Knowing what we mean”, 2016).

Therefore, the focus of our interest is focalized on the term "inclusive", which dictates a new perception and proves the willingness to change some social contexts through the redefinition of concepts, goals and criteria in educational systems. The framework places schools at the centre of the analysis, because the inclusion is a process and the inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students (Ainscow, 2005, p. 15). According to Qvortrup & Qvortrup (2018), the understanding of inclusion in education has transcended the assumption that inclusion is about students with special needs. It concerns the inclusion of all children. Inclusion is much more than special needs (Evans, 2007). Inclusion replaces the term "*integration*" (Pijl et al., 2002) and is attributed as "*non-exclusionary education*", the education that includes the needs of all students and sets the ideological basis for the creation of functional educational structures. The concept of social exclusion is important because it refers to the lack of resources that individuals and groups face during their inclusion, as well as the policies that are developed to address the problem (Nikolopoulos, 2000).

In addition, the development of Inclusive Pedagogy, a theoretical and research concern in the field of Special Education and Training was strengthened as a fundamental pedagogical principle for all. Through living and learning together, respect for the Other is built and harmonious coexistence between the learners and citizens is ensured (Soulis, 2002). So, "*the concept of ‘special’ needs is vague and ultimately not helpful. Concepts such as responding to diverse learning needs and styles, appropriate resources, accessibility and quality, and child-friendly education for all, are useful and accurate in overcoming barriers to learning*" (Stubbs, 2008, p. 110).

In conclusion, what has great social and educational value are the ways of learning in a school's daily practice, its policy and its philosophy. When learning styles are implemented effectively and inclusively, they can be integrated into an overall school perspective and policy (Reid, 2019). Then, the concept of inclusion is based on the notion that schools should provide for the needs of all the children in their communities whatever the level of their ability, disability, educational need or another form of diversity (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2017). Also, organising support in schools depends on multiple variables; nevertheless, the support teacher role and the teachers' collaboration are some of the key ones ([Sanahuja-Gavaldà](#), 2016).

4. Creating an educational culture within inclusive teaching and support practices

Pedagogy is composed of the act of teaching and the ideas, values and beliefs informing, sustaining and justifying that act (Alexander, 2013, as cited in Gudjonsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016). Inclusion is emphasized as an on-going and never-ending process. It

is grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights and access to education for all (Gudjonsdottir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016).

Inclusive pedagogy embraces cultural differences, constructs welcoming environments for sharing cultural perspectives, and assigns writing that challenges students to think critically about diversity and equity issues. Inclusive pedagogy supports ALL learners (<https://tilt.colostate.edu/prodev/teaching-effectiveness/tef/inclusive-pedagogy/ip-pedagogical-practices/>). Inclusive pedagogy refers to the ways that courses, classroom activities, curricula, and assessments consider issues of diversity in an effort to engage all students in learning that is meaningful, relevant, and accessible (<https://inclusivepedagogy.uchicago.edu/>).

Thus, basic principles and best practices for the pedagogical foundation of a school and social inclusion are (Collins & Cook, 2001):

- the democratic attitude towards diversity,
- the culture and acceptance of all members regardless of characteristics and particularities,
- the strengthening of values and the strengthening of the authenticity of the individual,
- the independence and autonomous life as a right for everyone,
- the cultivation of the individual's capacity for learning,
- the responsibility as a universal principle and life attitude, individually and collectively,
- inclusive education for All.

Inclusive teaching is relevant to all disciplines, regardless of subject matter and describes a foundational intention that can take the form of many different techniques and pedagogical approaches. Especially, the principles of universal design are intended to make course materials and learning experiences accessible and welcoming to all learners. They guide instructors to vary their teaching strategies to meet diverse learning needs and perspectives, allow students various ways to demonstrate their learning, and encourage the development of a supportive class community, among other recommendations. So, the best practices of Inclusive Pedagogy are (<https://www.celt.iastate.edu/instructional-strategies/creating-an-inclusive-classroom/inclusive-pedagogy/>):

- Being Flexible – open to change,
- Being Equitable – ensuring consistency and accessibility for all,
- Working Collaboratively – involving all students,
- Supporting Personalization – recognizing that successful learning and teaching is governed by personal difference,
- Embracing Diversity – creating opportunities to develop an awareness of diversity and global issues,

In total, prerequisites for inclusive learning in a teaching context are:

- the support of the individual with and without particularities in heterogeneous learning groups,
- the personalization of learning requirements,

- the differentiated approach to the organization of the cognitive object,
- the differentiation of objectives in the course activities, and
- collaborative processing of assignments so that all teachers are able to educate all children across a wide range of learning differences (Boyle & Topping, 2012).

According to Pigiaki (2002), the experiential role of the teacher influences the dynamics of teaching and learning and the appropriate pedagogical climate is a factor of quality teaching. The pedagogical climate (inclusive climate) is defined by:

- principles of knowledge (knowledge as a constant challenge),
- principles of interpersonal communication (acceptance, safety, self-confidence, self-esteem, equal treatment, respect, empathy, faith and trust in the value of the individual, school counseling, etc.),
- values of pedagogical dialogue (freedom, responsibility, critical inquiry, encouragement, justice, tolerance, self-criticism, etc.), and
- principles of work (consistency, creation, methodicality, self-discipline, self-concentration, reflection, etc.).

Education professionals must have flexible working methods with appropriate teaching adaptations and realistic goals for all learning profiles and be able to collaborate interdisciplinary on the educational needs of all students (Jermyn, 2004).

It is important to create teaching and learning situations that will strengthen the interaction between the learner and learning (Soulis, 2002). Also, by implementing multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression, course designers can ensure they are providing options in every dimension of learning to meet learners where they are (Collier et al., 2020). According to Meister (2004), many teaching methods are particularly suitable for an inclusive course. The effectiveness of the methods is important for the inclusive teacher. Thus, with a focus on school inclusion, the choice of educational methods for teaching should be the result of a combined method, through (Hasapis, 2000):

- the intended learning outcomes for All,
- the content of the thematic sections of the course,
- the main characteristics of the target group,
- the application of each method in relation to the existing technical structure.

Any didactic and learning teaching requires differentiating pedagogical goals on three levels: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Noyé, Piveteau, 1999). The development of these skills should include good working knowledge of the following components of the assessment process in order to determine the presence of a suspected disability (<https://www.naset.org/publications/assessment-in-special-education-series#c14508>):

- Collection: The process of tracing and gathering information from the many sources of background information on a child such as school records, observation, parent intakes, and teacher reports.
- Analysis: The processing and understanding of patterns in a child's educational, social, developmental, environmental, medical, and emotional history.

- Evaluation: The evaluation of a child's academic, intellectual, psychological, emotional, perceptual, language, cognitive, and medical development in order to determine areas of strength and weakness.
- Determination: The determination of the presence of a suspected disability and the knowledge of the criteria that constitute each category.
- Recommendation: The recommendations concerning educational placement and program that need to be made to the school, teachers, and parents.

In conclusion, an education for all should emphasize insisting on key principles (key-areas), as the inclusion of all students, fulfilling goals and objectives (inclusion goals) and focusing on the individual needs of the target group (Munn et al., 2000). The above criteria are principles and practices of inclusive education. They also establish a non-exclusionary education, an inclusive teaching with: - the learner's participation and individual contribution to the learning process, - as well as mastering various strategies for solving cognitive, learning and social problems from the teacher's side. We have tried to set the pedagogical framework that can be formed around inclusion. We focused on teaching choices required in relation to inclusive practices in the school classroom (Amzat & Padilla-Valdez, 2017/ Haug, 2017/ Forlin, 2012/ Florian, 2014), as maximizing the teacher's skills and mentoring opportunities for the school team is a great achievement (Somma & Bennett, 2020). As Florian (2008) suggests *"that it is through an examination of 'the things that teachers can do' that we will begin to bring meaning to the concept of inclusion"*.

Finally, the quality of teaching and learning processes in inclusive education has a major priority. An in-depth understanding of inclusion practices in the educational process combined with positive attitudes of teachers is a critical factor for the implementation of inclusion (Krischler et al., 2019). As educators, we have a legal obligation to make courses accessible for learners with documented disabilities, but we have an ethical duty to do so for all learners (Thompson et al., 2021). Meeting the needs of diverse learners is an essential element of effective education (Collier et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

The meaning of inclusion is significantly framed by different national and international contexts (Armstrong et al., 2011). According to Suleymanov (2015), the practice of inclusive education gets increasingly obvious in gaining more support and interest in the education system in almost all countries in the world. The concept of inclusion has contributed a lot to the learning and teaching practice as well as the theoretical and practical experience of schools. Inclusive education is the challenge of the future for the schools of the 21st century, because the status of education is based on human relations and offers everything that is considered necessary for the educational approach and treatment of all children. Inclusive education aims to transform society through the transformation of education itself (Kasidis et al., 2015).

As such, the promotion of inclusion is not simply a technical or organizational change – it is a movement in a clear philosophical direction. Moving to more inclusive ways of working, therefore, requires shifts in policy-makers' values and ways of thinking,

which enable them to provide a vision shaping a culture of inclusion, through significant changes within schools and classrooms. And, of course, this has to involve the wider community (Ainscow et al., 2019).

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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