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Issues of Inclusive Education: Some Aspects to be Considered

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to shed light on the aspects of inclusion which have proved to be essential for further development of newly founded inclusive education. The practice of inclusive education gets increasingly obvious in gains more support and interest in education system in almost all countries in the world. There is a distinctly declared agreement in the world that all children have the right to education regardless of their race, gender, nationality, disability and etc. And these agreements have been indicated in universally important documents. Over several decades the concept of inclusion has contributed a lot to the teaching and learning practice as well as theoretical and practical experience of schools. However, all these blessing have not appeared ready in a moment. The analysis of inclusive education experience of some countries, which have quite sophisticated inclusion, apparently indicates that the satisfactory results of inclusion turned out only after serious and energy-consuming reforms and innovations.

Keywords: integration, mainstreaming, inclusive education, innovation

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Issues on the Way to Inclusive Education: Some Aspects to be Considered

Introduction

For certain reasons special needs education has always been of inferior importance both in developed and developing countries. Stereotypically, children with disabilities have been deemed to be indifferent to education and unable to perform as perfectly as others. This misconception led to exclusion of children with disabilities in education which left them out of focus not only in education but also in almost all areas of social life. Therefore this sphere always demanded special, harder and affectionate consideration throughout all stages of history as disabilities vary in terms of mental and physical aspects and both require deep consideration and professional approach in every corner of the world. Nowadays many countries are committed to inclusive education do their best to give way to inclusion within education system. However, as experience indicates, it is not easy task. There are several issues which need to be taken into serious consideration for the appropriate and effective realization of inclusive education. Below, some of those issues relating to historical, theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education are discussed.

Towards inclusive education

The history of inclusive education dates back to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which emphasizes that everyone has the right to education. Moreover, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (20 December, 1993) emphasized rights of education children with special needs. Another globally significant agreement supporting CSN is UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 7 of that convention decisively declared that parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights (UN Convention, 2006). These three main declarations inspired special needs education which was the first step towards inclusive education. The root of inclusive education lies in integration, mainstreaming schooling, or normalization which was initiated in UK, USA and Scandinavian countries respectively. The above-mentioned phenomena recognized the rights of CSN to attend regular schools for education. However, none of these educational formats meant full

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inclusion of CSN into classroom process. In the course of development of special needs education the concept of inclusion substituted for all terminologies i.e., integration, mainstreaming with expectations that this term will mean education of CSN in regular classrooms, a sense of belonging, social interactions, and academic achievements (Odom, Buysse, and Soukakou, 2011). The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), adopted in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) defined general principles of IE: provide universal access to schools for everybody, and promote equity. This principles call for being proactive in predicting barriers in access to education and identifying recourses to eliminate these barriers. Inclusive education is a process which increases the opportunities and capacity education to meet needs and interests of all learners, and consequently implement the goals of EFA. Taking universal human rights into account the main doctrine of inclusive education should guide policy and practice in education. World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Salamanca, Spain, June 1994 gave major stimulus for IE. With more than 300 participants from 92 countries and 25 international organizations this conference made a huge jump towards IE with the change of basic policies to encourage the inclusion of children into education mentioning that special needs education - an issue of equal concern to countries of the North and of the South - cannot advance in isolation, and it has to form part of an overall educational strategy (Salamanca, 1994). The conference regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (Salamanca, 1994). This approach was affirmed by World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, April 2000 once again mentioning the right of people with special needs to education (UNESCO, 2000).

Integration

As an educational terminology "*integration*" has been used for a long period of time, and this education format still exists in some countries. Integration means the process of transferring CSN from special schools to mainstream schools (Thomas et al., 2005). This process urged the children "*to fit in*" to the classroom setting and school environment. But the overall results of the process were assimilation. However, unlike integration, the emergence of inclusion concentrated on transformation of profoundly rooted structural obstacles rather than

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assimilation. This transformation changed dominant interpretation of "*success*", "*failure*", "*ability*" and so on (Barton, 2003).

Mainstreaming

Though "*mainstreaming*" has been in common use in education for decades, this word, both as a concept and a term, has been defined very imprecisely. One early initiative to offer a model of mainstreaming outlined three elements that should characterize it: a continuum of types of services for students with disabilities, reduction in the number of children "*pulled out*" of regular classes, and the increased provision of special services within regular classrooms rather than outside of regular classrooms (Smith, 1998).

Inclusive education

Basically, IE means educating learners with special educational needs in regular education settings. However, IE is not limited to only placement. Rather, it means facilitating education of students with special needs with a whole suite of provisions which include curriculum adaptation, adapted teaching methods, modified assessment techniques, and accessibility arrangements. In short, inclusive education is a multi-component strategy or, perhaps, a mega- strategy (Mitchell, 2008). Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve education for all (EFA). Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2009).

UNESCO policy guideline for inclusive education also justifies three main reasons for IE. First, educational justification: IE demands to develop ways of teaching that respond to different needs and weaknesses of children so that all children can take advantage of classroom process. Second, social

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justification: inclusive education is a goodwill idea to change attitudes toward diversity, and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society. Third, economic justification: it is cost-effective to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specializing in different groups of children (UNESCO, 2009). With its challenges IE requires not only special educators but also entire school staff to work together with a joint concern for the sake of full inclusion (Corbett, 2001). According to Thomas and Vaughan (2004) the target of IE is to value all children as equal for education so that they are able to take full part in social life of society in their later adult life.

For Mittler (2000) IE is a total reformation of education system in terms of pedagogy and curriculum. These reforms are viewed as intentions to welcome all diversities such as gender, nationality, culture, language, academic achievements, and disabilities. Skjørten (2001) also carries the same view stating that inclusion is an inclusive society schools, kindergartens, and other institutions welcomes people with social care. Here the essence of inclusion becomes integral part of humanism which argues that all forms of segregation contradict universal moral values. IE become and remains as a leading idea which has inspired a lot of educational institutions and educators to initiate projects to transform cultures and procedures in schools for diversity (Barton and Armstrong, 2007). Furthermore, Barton and Armstrong (2007) discuss the origin of IE arguing that as IE appeared in different social and historical settings it should be viewed as geographically situated concept, rather than universally shared value. However, there have been several huge initiatives on global scale to disperse IE all over the world as a useful means for the realization of inclusive society. The requirements of inclusive society are human right, equality, justice, and struggle against segregation. All these values play a central role in inclusive educational policy and practice (Barton and Armstrong, 2007). Briggs (2004) sees inclusive education as an instrument to improve schools not only in terms of academic issues but also in social aspects. For her, the principles of inclusion in schools should involve aims on how to transform schools into better places for both acting and learning.

International principles of inclusive education

International principles of inclusive education are defined in the Salamanca Statement and Framework

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for Action (UNESCO, 1994): 1. The guiding principle that informs this Framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions; 2. Special needs education incorporates the proven principles of sound pedagogy from which all children may benefit; 3. The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have; 4. Within inclusive schools, children with special educational needs should receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education; 5. Special attention should be paid to the needs of children and youth with severe or multiple disabilities; 6. Curricula should be adapted to children's needs, not vice versa; 7. Children with special needs should receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum.

Of course, there are more principles apart from above-mentioned ones which are useful references and guides to design and realize inclusive curriculum. What generally features above principals is an emphasis on individual needs of children with disabilities, and the necessity to address to their needs within education policy and curriculum. As this is the case, a teacher/ special needs educator needs to explore factors which can mediate as professional tools in order not only to include all children in a class but also to teach all of them. In the search of success factors boosting inclusive education, Frederickson and Cline (2009) consider two relevant factors for successful inclusion: the quality of the program and the extent to which the general education system accommodates the academic and social needs of a diverse range of young people with disabilities and SNE. Lipsky and Gartner (1989) report on the National Study of Inclusive Education which reviewed about 1,000 school districts and produced seven factors for inclusion: visionary leadership; collaboration; refocused use of assessment; support for staff and students; funding; effective parental involvement; use of effective program modules and classroom practices.

Innovations in education

"An innovation is a planned change, which aims to improve practices." (Skogen, 2001, p. 326) Dalin (1978) suggests that innovation means a deliberate attempt to improve practice in relation to certain desired

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objectives. For Dalin (1978) most studies of educational innovations are concerned with relatively small adjustments of old practices, replacing them by new methods, organizational arrangements or personal policies, and the innovations are not concerned with a redefinition of objectives but rather with a redefinition of the operations of old objectives. Dalin also suggests (1978) a "typology of innovations" with the following dimensions: *Objectives and Functions*. Innovations are mainly concerned with the objectives and functions of the school in the broader social and economic context; *Organization and Administration*. Innovations mainly concerned with the organization and administration of the educational system; *Roles and Role Relations*. Innovations mainly concerned with role definition and role relationships which aim to improve relations between individuals and among groups; *Curriculum*. Innovations mainly concerned with the curriculum, its aim, content, methods, evaluations, material and internal organizations of instructions.

Barriers in innovations in education

Any significant innovations in education will encounter several barriers. From the analysis of educational innovations, the following four categories of barriers have emerged (Dalin, 1978): 1. Value barriers: Some people regard value differences as varying relationships to the culture. The fact is that most educational innovations face the problem of value differences. Values conflicts become apparent when for example, racial integration or integration of the disadvantaged in the normal school are expected changes. Conflicts in values do not always emerge from the characteristics of the innovation itself. Conflicts can also manifest itself as a result of characteristics of the user population which is called "*user readiness*". Readiness can be defined as the motivation and ability of the user to accept an innovation (Dalin, 1978). Diversity of values can appear as a concern when inclusive education is introduced as an educational innovation because it seems as a radical change in education, and the users, for example educators and even the parents of CSN, can possibly hesitate to welcome this innovation.

2. Power barriers: These barriers result from power distribution and changes of authority structure of the system. Major educational reforms usually bring some change of role relationship (Dalin, 1978). When it comes to inclusive education, power and duty distribution between class teachers and teacher assistants or special needs

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educators can become a barrier if mutual agreement cannot be attained. The disproportion in authority and responsibility distribution will inevitably influence the quality of IE negatively.

3. Practical barriers: Practical barriers are of more physical nature which appears in the form of time, resources and system barriers. Practical barriers may be of special interest in relation to innovations since these factors have often been shown to slow down changes (Skogen, 2001). These kinds of barriers become a serious concern for IE because with its innovative design IE needs time to be adapted to education system. IE also requires overcoming resource barriers such as teacher trainings, curriculum adaptation and relevant teaching materials. Bureaucratic structure of the education system may be a system barrier for IE.

4. Psychological barriers: Sometimes people resist changes even when these changes do not challenge their values and there is not serious practical problem. This resistance simply comes from a psychological barrier (Dalin, 1978). In the case of IE, psychological barrier may become problematic issue of specific nature because it is rather abstract phenomena and it requires professional treatment.

Classroom arrangement

Effective educators consider classroom environment and make necessary adaptations in order to make sure that it facilitates academic and social needs of students (Friend and Bursuck, 2006). Since one of the essential preliminaries of inclusive classroom is suitable classroom arrangement that contributes to learning and development of all students including those with special needs, it is important to form a universal design so that all students have physical access to all materials and activities. Universal design for classroom environment includes principles that support creating classroom environment and instructions so that they lead to learning of all children (Samuels, 2007). For Burgstahler (2010), universal design means arranging classroom setting to be usable by all students without modifying and applying special design. Pielstick (1999) classified three aspects of the classroom environment: the physical, social and instructional. Sundstrom et al. (1990) also suggest that classroom arrangement that promotes informal and face-to face interaction empower inter-member communication and higher level of integrated group activities. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, p. 4) defines universal design as *"the design of products, environments, programs and services*

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to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

"Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed." The Centre for Universal Design (1997) defines universal design as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people without the need for adaptation or specialized design, and suggests seven principles: equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use. Universal design is not only about access, but also about creating a more inclusive and learning-friendly environment in schools. With universal design principles schools enable all students to learn, develop, and participate (UNESCO, 2009.)

The concept of universal design for learning

"Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that addresses the primary barrier to fostering expert learners within instructional environments: inflexible, "one-size-fits-all" curricula. It is inflexible curricula that raise unintentional barriers to learning. The learners who are "in the margins", such as the learners who are gifted and talented or have disabilities, are particularly vulnerable." (Meyer and Rose, 2005, p.4). There are three principles of Universal Design for Learning: I: provide multiple means of representation (the *"what"* of learning); II: provide multiple means of action and expression (the *"how"* of learning); III: provide multiple means of engagement (the *"why"* of learning).

The concept of academic achievement

Student achievement forms the basis of almost aspects of education. Simply, achievement means *"the accomplishment of something"*, and in education that *"something"* generally refers to articulated learning goals. Although learning process takes place in various contexts, the focus of educators rests on learning that occurs in established instructional environments such as schools and classrooms where educators interact with students to help them achieve explicit knowledge and skills (Guskey, 2013). For Fisher et al. (1995) academic achievement refers to successful performance in schooling. Schooling, in its term, includes academic skills such as writing, reading, problem solving etc. which are integral parts of academic content. School environment is critically

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important for advanced educational performance. The level of achievements of CSN in IE depends on several factors one of which is teaching approach of an educator. Teaching strategy has appeared to improve academic success throughout all grade levels for both with and without special needs (Fisher et al., 1995). Other techniques which has boosted educational attainments of CSN are the usage of didactic materials in addition to textbooks in the sphere of social studies (Gersten et al., 2006), and using an inquiry-based approach to science with a focus on varied ways of communicating learning (Pulincsar et al., 2001). Armstrong (2006) proposes more detailed definition of AA: academic achievement is the totality of speech acts and written communications that view the purpose of education primarily as supporting, encouraging, and facilitating a student's ability to obtain high grades and standardized test scores in school courses, especially in courses that are part of the core academic curriculum. For Armstrong (2006), first and foremost in academic achievement is an emphasis on academic *content* such as literature, science, and math, and academic *skills* such as reading, writing, problem solving, and critical thinking. Armstrong (2006) gives secondary status to the study of history, the social sciences, and foreign languages, and considers some content and skill areas to be outside AA such as music, drama, art, physical education, vocational education, and "*life skills*" (e.g. personal care, and health education).

Some studies show that (Sanders and Horn, 1998; Bailleul et al., 2008, as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010) that a competent teacher can support and boost academic achievements of children more than other factors. A teacher who is equipped with necessary knowledge and experience is apparently a leading factor to provide equal opportunities and education for all within inclusive setting. Reynolds (2009, as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010, p. 7) suggests that a teacher's joint features such as theoretical and empirical knowledge, teaching approach, and values can create a suitable learning environment for all.

Social constructivist theory

Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978) perceived disability as a socio-cultural developmental phenomenon. This is the peculiarity of his approach to disability. Vygotsky argues that disability appears as disability when it appears in the social context. Vygotsky decisively argued that the challenge of developing the higher psychological

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functions and personality of child with special needs can be implemented by providing really differentiated learning environment. Vygotsky proposed to set a learning environment in which children with disabilities are supplied with alternative ways of communication and development. By alternative ways Vygotsky implies psychological tools which are especially suitable for a disability. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism has important implications for teaching methods in IE, and it is noteworthy for reference in inclusive education for several reasons. This theory is also called sociocultural theory which obviously indicates that it has dual concentrations: the history of human development and cultural tools which determine the direction of human development and give it specific shape. The core of the theory emphasizes that development of a human occurs in accordance with the dominant values of the culture and through interaction with it. This interaction involves a wide collection of cultural factors ranging from animate and inanimate beings such as people and artefact respectively. Vygotsky underlined the importance of tools/artefacts (languages, number systems, signs and symbols) claiming that they perform dual function: they serve as a means for integration of a child into culture and transform a child into that culture simultaneously. For Vygotsky, appropriation of cultural tools enriches mental capacities and leads a child to learn in cultural context and use the tools while interacting with others. In early ages a child depends on others, mainly parents.

For Vygotsky, social interactions, which he named also as interpersonal processes, lead to internalization (an intrapersonal process) on later stages. The transaction from interpersonal processes to intrapersonal process consequently results in independent thinking. This transaction takes place with the help of more knowledgeable others within a child's zone of proximal development (ZDP). With more knowledgeable others Vygotsky refers to teachers, parent or peers who know more and help children learn new skills and information. Vygotsky proposed ZDP for the period of learning in which a child is not ready to develop on his/her own but is able to learn with the help of more knowledgeable others. In other words, ZDP is the distance between real and potential knowledge of children. ZDP also embraces concept of learning and development of Vygotsky's theory. In a short, the essence of this notion is that learning precedes development. The difference between the two levels of development (real and potential) is ZDP which is indicator of mental abilities. Learning takes place in ZPD and precedes a child's development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Running head: ISSUES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**Sociocultural activities**

Barbara Rogoff (2003) proposes sociocultural activity on three planes: participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship which deserve consideration in terms of IE. Concerning apprenticeship Rogoff argues that rather than relying on explanations to organize their learning, apprentices may achieve necessary skills in picking up information through watching, sometimes even without actually carrying out the central features of the task. While participating in activities, apprentices attend to informative ongoing events which are not necessarily designed for their instruction. However, the presence and keen observation of learners may well be expected or encouraged so that they participate in, and learn through the realisation of the important business of the community and family life (Rogoff, 2003). Sometimes simple observation explains more than detailed instructions. In this case participation in class environment (inclusive education), where mediating tools such as language, teaching aids works better for especially mentally retarded children, should be promoted. Through helping peers to implement tasks and watching more knowledgeable peers' way of involvement into activities children with special needs will be indirectly instructed in interpersonal involvements. This process will at least appear as a good motivation for persons with disability to keep improving. Rogoff generates the concept participatory appropriation (or appropriation) by which she means *"participatory appropriation is the personal process by which, through engagement in an activity, individuals change and handle a later situation in ways prepared by their own participation in the previous situation. This is a process of becoming, rather than acquisition."* (Rogoff, 2003, p. 142). The central idea of *"appropriation"* implies that children (in our case children with disabilities) change while participating in activities and consequently become ready to deal with situation in following activities.

Scaffolding and spiral curriculum

Scaffolding refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring (Bruner, 1978, p. 19) In other words, scaffolding means an active temporary support structure build around a child by a teacher or parent because while learning a child is dependent on more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978) who is more competent and skilled

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in certain area. As the child grows in knowledge and skill, the support is gradually reduced and totally removed when the child becomes an independent learner. Bruner (1960) believed that a child needs to learn main principles of a subject rather than master facts or data. Bruner proposed learning through inquiry with the guidance of an educator who accelerates a child's thinking, and insisted that grasping basic ideas intuitively should be at the base of learning at early ages. And later, the curriculum should revisit basic ideas repeatedly and expand upon them until a child has a complete understanding. Bruner called this process the "*spiral curriculum*" and advocated that organizing learning in a spiral way helps a child to organize ideas in an accessible and usable structure (Bruner, 1960). The spiral curriculum has some benefits and implications for IE context. First, the knowledge and skills are reinforced with repeated learning. The spiral curriculum also enables a child to learn in a logical order, from simple to complicated ideas. Moreover, in a recursive learning process, a child has a chance to apply previously gained knowledge to later activities.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory by Bandura (1977) states that observation, modeling and imitation are important means for cognitive and behavioral learning. Social learning theory suggests that academic and behavioral learning happens through four steps: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The implications of this theory for IE propose that CSN can observe other children and teachers, and learn and develop both academically and behaviorally by imitating them. "*Social learning focused on socialization, the process by which society attempts to teach children to behave like the ideal adults of that society.*" (Miller, p.233, 2011).

Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning is defined as groups of learners working together to solve a problem, to complete a task, or accomplish a common goal (Artz and Newman, 1990). The idea of this model is to involve all students in teamwork for the implementation of a task through interdependent and cooperative collaboration. Studies suggest that the effects of cooperative learning proved to be an efficient tool to increase academic achievements of students with and without disabilities. Comparing cooperative and individualized instructions, studies came to

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conclusion that cooperative learning produces better academic achievements for all for all students in a classroom (Stevens and Slavin, 1995). Moreover, cooperative learning promotes sense of belonging for all students (Johnson et al., 1984).

Participation and engagement

According to Finn (1993) there is consistent and close correlation between school engagement and academic achievements of students which manifests itself in constant attendance and regular participation in extra-curricular activities. In other words, the more participation in classroom process is, the more academic achievements are. Finn et al. also (1991) emphasize that participation at early ages in schools is in positive relations with performance at later years. Participation in educational activities is indicated by diverse forms of student endeavor that display attention and interest in schooling as well as involvement in school activities (Wehlage et al, 1989). The school engagement does not take place in a vacuum. With the educational activities happening within classroom the school context has a vital role in stimulating student engagement and development. School engagement is quite a broad understanding. There are behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Inclusive assessment

The report Assessment in Inclusive Setting developed by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2007) defines inclusive assessment as an approach to assessment in mainstream settings where policy and practice are designed to promote the learning of all pupils as far as possible. The overall goal of inclusive assessment is that all assessment policies and procedures should support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusion, including those with special educational needs. To achieve the goals of inclusive assessment defined by European Agency some factors need to be considered proposed in Assessment in Inclusive Setting (2007). One of the first and foremost factors is the principles underpinning inclusive assessment: all assessment procedures should be used to inform and promote learning for all pupils; all pupils should be entitled to be part of all assessment procedures; the needs of pupils with special

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educational needs should be considered and accounted for within all general as well as special educational needs specific assessment policies; All assessment procedures should be complementary and inform each other; all assessment procedures should aim to 'celebrate' diversity by identifying and valuing all pupils' individual learning progress and achievements; inclusive assessment explicitly aims to prevent segregation by avoiding - as far as possible - forms of labeling and by focusing on learning and teaching practice that promotes inclusion in a mainstream setting.

The role of a classroom teacher

As a result of the inclusive education movement, classroom teachers have become significantly more involved in the education . The attitude of the class teacher towards students has a major impact on the success of all students, particularly those with special needs. Classroom teachers must be able to perform different skills, such as the following: acting as a team member on assessment and IEP committees; being innovative in providing equal education opportunities for all students, including CSN; and individualizing instruction for CSN; advocating for CSN. To sum up, classroom teachers control educational programs for all students (Smith et al., 1998).

Studies suggest (Sanders and Horn, 1998; Bailleul et al., 2008, as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010) that the quality of the teacher contributes more to learner achievement than any other factor such as class size, class composition, or background. Reynolds (2009, as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010, p. 7) says that it is the knowledge, beliefs and values of the teacher that create an effective learning environment for all students, making the teacher a critical influence in education for inclusion and the development of the inclusive school. European Commission Communication Improving the Quality of Teacher Education (2007) states that teachers need to have the full range of subject knowledge, attitudes and pedagogic skills to be able to help young people to reach their full potential by responding to specific needs of each student applying a wide range of teaching strategies. Moreover, in the same document it is highlighted that Higher Education institutions have an important role to ensure that their teacher education courses are based upon solid evidence and good classroom practice (European

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Commission Communication Improving the Quality of Teacher Education, 2007, p. 15).

The role of a teacher assistant

Students with disabilities who attend in inclusive schools are now likely to be allocated a TA for further support to benefit from education with their peers. So the relevant response to inclusive education is to make sure that there is an extra teacher available in the classroom whose role is important for success of inclusive practice (Lacey, 1999). Farrell et al. (1999, as cited in Vincett et al., 2005) clearly present the distinction between the role of TAs and teachers. Teachers plan the programs, monitor their success, hold review meetings, and liaise with parents. And the responsibility of a TAs simply is to implement the programs under teachers' guidance. And TAs support students in mainstream classes by keeping in contact with those who need help, but not sitting with a student. Support cannot be only in favor of students with special needs. Rather, it must support class teachers (Hrekow and Barrow, 1993). For Kennedy et al., (1975) it is not the responsibility of a TA to plan activities, organize or manage classroom. Their performance is restricted to only encouraging and helping student when they need support. Since TAs are mainly allocated to work specially with CSN, some problems emerge from this practice. First, students become dependent on TAs both socially and academically. Moreover, this practice causes identification of such students as different, and consequently can make a barrier for a class teacher to know students with special needs better in order to plan and prepare curriculum activities for their inclusion. And lastly, this practice prevents the whole class students from benefiting support of TAs (Jones, 1987). To avoid these negative effects of classroom support by TAs a number of principles should be followed. First of all, the instruction provided by TAs should be supplemental, but not primary. Second, TAs should work on professional plans prepared by a class teacher or a special educator. Third, teacher assistants should get professional trainings. Finally, TAs should be under regular monitoring and supervision of qualified experts (Causton-Theoharis et al., 2007). The fact is that the successful inclusion of CSN does not normally happen without assistance, and to create effective assistance school personnel have to work in cooperative methods to provide appropriate programs to all students (Smith, 1998).

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Curriculum Adaptation

Curriculum adaptation is an open-ended progressive process that adapts stipulated program to meet the demands of students with special educational needs. It facilitates the teaching process to welcome needs and interests of all students with various abilities and disabilities. To build a sound and full relation between individual and class curricula a teacher/special needs educator needs empirically tested model which fills all the gaps between the two curricula. Curriculum Relation Model by Johnsen (2012) reflects important aspects for meaningful and individually adapted curriculum. In this model the main areas are: *the pupil/s, educational intentions, educational content, methods and organization, assessment, communication, care, and context/frame factors*. The seven aspects are embraced by contextual aspects within which the inner activity of schooling is situated (Johnsen, 2012). These aspects are elaborated below.

Individual Education Plan

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written document developed for a student with special educational needs; it describes the student's current needs, performance and goals for the school year, the particular special educational services to be delivered, and the procedures by which outcomes are to be evaluated (Kirk et al, 2012). The IEP also assists teachers monitor the student's development and provides a framework to deliver information about student's achievements to parents. The IEP is updated regularly to note any changes in student's education program that appear to be necessary after the assessment of student's annual progress. IEP is prepared through a collaboration of the school, parents, the student (where appropriate) and other relevant personnel or agencies. IEP refers to adapted aspects of educational program and focuses attention on priority needs. Only certain aspects of the curriculum which arises from assessment need to be modified. The amount of modification and support depend on individual learning needs of CSN. IEP is an effective educational tool to support CSN to learn to leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives (NCSE, 2006).

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Summary

This article tried to delineate main points which are described as vital aspects of inclusion in relevant literature. Regarding the concept of academic achievement, relevant literatures were reviewed for accurate and full definition. Regarding the inclusive education, definitions from various literatures along with the international principles of inclusive education were presented. As for the teaching methods theories such as social constructivist theory, social learning theory, cooperative learning, and types of school engagements were discussed. These theories also shed light on the concept of social interaction. The concept of assessment was reviewed on a large scale in terms of general assessment approach, principles, focus and methods of inclusive assessment proposed by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2007), and assessment data collection sources. The challenges of IE were reviewed in the context of innovations in education and barriers preventing these innovations. Moreover, this article included the roles and responsibilities of a classroom teacher and teacher assistants, collaboration and co-teaching approaches, and curriculum adaptation. The above-mentioned elements are just some but very important points for successful inclusive education.

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