

Possibilities of inclusive education

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Abstrakt The given paper deals with the problematics of inclusive education and looks for the answers to the question what possibilities of application it has in educational praxis. The authors explain the problematics of the inclusive education teaching process, which the actors of inclusive nurture-and-educational process participate in. Therefore they highlight the importance of keeping the principles of inclusive education, referring to the aims and conditions of inclusion. They try to explain the real inclusion concept which should prepare the broad pupil population to the life in society.

Klíčová slova Inclusion, aims and conditions of inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive nurture-and-educational process, principles of inclusive education, actors of the inclusive nurture-and-educational process

1. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

In the document The World Development Report in Washington, some basic conceptual characteristics of inclusive education were defined (UNESCO, 2001, p. 12). The Polish author T. Zacharunková (2010, pp. 288 – 293) claims that inclusive (integrational) education has to be viewed as a help in each person's development, independently of any obstacles. Therefore, any physical, social, or emotional disability cannot be a disqualifying factor. Inclusion asks a broad vision of Education for Everyone in the care of various pupils' needs, not excluding those who have to face exclusion and marginalisation. In the international measures, inclusive education is based on legal appointments of the UN, UNESCO, and Salamanca Declaration. Inclusive education expresses the obligation to nurture and educate a pupil in his or her maximal possibilities in the chosen school. Here it is necessary to point out that the school has to adapt the supporting services to the pupil, not the pupil to the services. Inclusion asks that each pupil has to have a profit on the presence in a usual class.

Z. Helus (2007, p. 218) notes about an inclusive school in the sense that it is not only a school that includes a broad palette of various pupils' individualities concerning their abilities, interests, family and cultural backgrounds, disabilities etc., but it also organises the

teaching process and cohabitation of pupils in the class in that way that all pupils gain the best possible results and each of them contributes by his or her unique to the positive atmosphere of solidarity. According to Z. Helus (2007, p. 218), in a conceptual way, this school „follows the aim to be able to live together, to enrich the others by the fact that I am who I am; and to accept my own enrichment by the others by the fact that they are different than me, that they are just the way they are.“

Experts assume that a child with a disability will be happier and better prepared for life when he or she will be offered a special care in a usual school. The paper Foundation for Education Research showed that pupils with some kind of disability or learning disability:

- want to stay in a usual school rather than to go back to a special school; and their parents have the same opinion;
- have better results in a social and emotional field, they are more self-confident and independent;
- were able to accept their disability or other problems realistically (Kerrová, S., 1997, p. 98).

According to S. Grofčíková (2007, p. 31), it is acceptable to understand the notion inclusion: „*as a concept (strategy) which accepts a person as an individuality with his or her differences, without taking these differences as a barrier. Inclusion in education is a process of maximization of participation and removal of barriers in learning for all learning people in the environment where they live. Inclusion includes appreciation of diversity (variousness), understanding of difficulties, distinguishing and respecting of individual differences.*“

The roots of our modern inclusive trend are in the U.S. The first legislative solution in terms of integrative education of children with a disability comes from 1954. C. R. Reynold and E. Fletcher-Jansen (In Lechta, V. et col., 2009, p. 10) write that in 1954 in Pennsylvania, the court decision was made according which inclusion of all pupils into state schools is „fair, ethical and equitable“.

According to M. Wilhelmová (2003, p. 4), regardless of possibilities of his or her achievements, each person has a right to be respected as an equal, tantamount, and self-defining creator of his or her life in society. Inclusion in a thought and realisation level guarantees each

individual that the society will defend and represent his or her needs and interests without selection and segregation.

The inclusion quality is determined not only by opportunities, but also by barriers for the inclusive culture development. Nowadays, some methodological means for evaluation and self-evaluation of inclusion process in inclusive schools exist, and *Inclusion Index* is one of the international method which has been successfully applied and which is determined for all school degrees (Žovinec, E., 2007, p. 90). The inclusion index offers an adequate systematic to the schools' needs in the international context and it is viewed as an innovative means supporting inclusive processes of schools.

According to M. Bartoňová (2010, p. 12, 18), for disabled children, pupils and students inclusive education is conditioned by a creation of quality conditions, supporting services and measures on the personal, legislative, economic, pedagogical, and technical level, where changes of advisory system, support of the further education of pedagogical workers and informational activity belong as well. Inclusion needs a mutual adaptation, that means not only the adaptation of pupils with special nursery-and-educational needs, their adaptation to the average in the way of behaving, achievement standards, but also conversely, acceptance of deviations from standards, values and behaviour of intact schoolmates.

1.1 Characteristics of inclusive education principles

Inclusion enables the physically and mentally disabled pupils to learn in usual classes with a feeling of solidarity. Therefore, we can attribute these four characteristics to inclusion:

- *A school placement in the residence* – within an inclusive model, the pupils visit the same school which they would visit if they were not exceptional. It is the same school of other pupils, which is visited in the student district. They contribute to understanding the learning community in the same way as disabled pupils.
- *The principle of natural proportion* – it holds that exceptional pupils should be placed in schools and classes in the natural ratio to the phenomenon of exceptionality within a general population. If some pupils with multiplied disabilities need an extensive help, the total number of disabled pupils in the class should be lowered.
- *Restructuring of teaching and learning* – inclusion by the means of restructuring includes the general and special education of pedagogues who work in a partnership with providers of related services, with families and pupils to ensure that additional aids, services and special education are provided to help the pupils learning in a usual class. A great variability exists in the way how teachers offer special educational services within education in usual classes. State educational programmes which implement inclusion by the means of restructuring, pedagogues' strong sides and talents with various types of trainings and skills contribute to equipment of individualised instructions joined within a usual class.
- *Placement adequate to age and level* – then, inclusion supports education of all pupils in the environment adequate and suitable to their age and level (Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Wehmeyer, M. L., 2007, pp. 42 – 43).

These four principles are controversial because according to the mentioned authors, in fact two main problems exist which are in the centre of the inclusive discussion. Firstly, there is the removal of a placement continuum, and secondly, there is an increasing amount of time which pupils spend in a usual class.

1.1.1 Actors of inclusive nurture-and-educational process

Education of pupils with special nurture-and-educational needs in the inclusive process is a part of intact pupils' education in usual school types and usual classes. We are interested in how the inclusive educational process differs from the usual teaching. In inclusive education, the classic triangle of actors of teaching: pupil – teacher – issue, used in general didactics, expands this way:

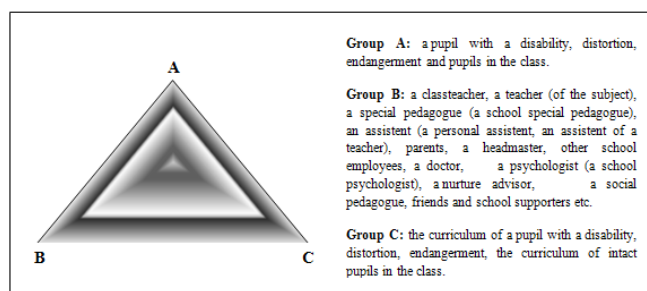


Fig. 1: Actors of the inclusive teaching
(In Matuška, O., 2010, p. 121)

Pedagogues', parents' and pupils' views of inclusion are summarised by foreign authors A. Turnbull, R. Turnbull, M. L. Wehmeyer (2007, pp. 44 – 46) according to realised researches in which, however, inclusion had some restrictions. For example, most of research studies do not describe the quality of inclusive procedures or do not enable the amount of time spent in the inclusive programme, with the influence on the general intention, to what extension the pupils from culturally and linguistically different environments have an adequate respect, support and accommodation. The deficiencies are shown in following classification which identifies the pedagogues', parents' and pupils' views of inclusive approaches:

Pedagogues' views – positives – are these:

- Pupils with a disability may be educated in a usual class successfully, if necessary additional aids, services and specially designed instructions are available.
- If the support is offered, most of teachers providing a general education feel successfully in the education of disabled pupils.
- Positive experiences with disabled pupils and information about inclusion support the acceptance of principles.
- The better educated and more experienced a teacher is, the more able he or she will be to practise and support inclusion.

Pedagogues' views – negatives – say that:

- Pupils with limited abilities need a specialised value adjustment out of the education in a usual class to gain the benefit of an intensive and individual tuition.
- The number of pupils in a class is the main obstacle of inclusive procedures. Smaller classes contribute to more positive results.
- Special educational possibilities will not be implemented to the general education sufficiently to ensure an effective education.
- Teachers with the general and special education do not get enough time or professional preparation for realisation of inclusion.

Parents' views – positives – lie in:

- Usual classes improve the field of improving self-concept, supporting of friendship, education of academic workers and preparation for the real world.
- The parents of pupils without limited abilities identified advantages (sensibility to the others' needs, a greater acceptance of diversity, learning results) for their children.

Parents' views – negatives – contain these fields:

- The pupils with learning disabilities hope that they will be provided a room offering a useful help, a calm workplace and less difficult and funnier educational activities.
- The pupils without learning disabilities express concerns about disturbing pupils.

Many empirical researches dedicated to the consequences of inclusion in praxis have been conducted (most of them have been conducted in the U. S.). The results showed that inclusion is a process which has lots of views and levels. However, it differs according to educational systems given by a country, depending on the type of special nurture-and-educational needs of a pupil (Bartoňová, M., 2010, pp. 14 – 15).

According to V. Lechta (2010, p. 29), pupils within the inclusive educational concept are not divided into two groups (that means those who have special nurture-and-educational needs, and those who do not have them) anymore because in this case it is about the only heterogeneous group of pupils with different individual needs. In more simple explanation the integration asks a greater adaptation of a child to a school, it includes a pupils' preparation for integration to usual schools where a pupil has to adapt to the school and it is not assumed that the school alone has to change to be able to manage a greater heterogeneity, diversity of pupils. On the contrary, inclusion tries to adapt the educational environment to children, implies a radical reform of the education in a curricular field, in the field of evaluation and creation of groups of pupils, it is based on acceptance of diversity regarding their gender, nationality, race, language origin, social background, level of achievements or disability.

1.2 Aims and condition of inclusion

Inclusion is about a priori acceptance of the minority of disabled pupils. The long-term aim of inclusion is illustrated by C. Lindmeier (In Lechta, V., 2010, p. 30), relying on *Průvodce pro inkluzi* published by UNESCO in 2005. While integration joins with special needs education, inclusion joins to education for all, to an inclusive school where heterogeneity is considered an enrichment of the educational process. The change of a paradigm sets also the change of the aim, that is from „integration for the disabled“ to „education for all“.

By pupils with a disability, distortion and endangerment it is necessary to watch and realise the same aims of education like by intact pupils, while it is necessary to fulfil their special nurture-and-educational needs according to their real biological, psychical and social development potential.

A common teaching of pupils with special nurture-and-educational needs and intact pupils creates these conditions:

- For an optimal development of intact functions by pupils with various nurture-and-educational needs.
- A standard school environment may offer rich stimuli for a pupil with special nurture-and-educational needs in communication, learning styles etc. for an optimal (re)habilitation (remedy) of his or her distorted physical, psychical and social abilities.
- By a talented pupil, a special curriculum and Individual Education Programme (IEP) should develop his or her extraordinary skills: in specific areas of his or her extraordinary abilities and skills in that way that his or her emotional life will be enriched and his or her personality will develop. A harmonic development of the personality's talent, emotions and will may be a guarantee

of a healthy development of a talented individual and the inclusive environment may provide a better possibility of development of social functions of a talented pupil.

- Many situations occur for a cooperative learning with all its didactic advantages by intact pupils in an inclusive class. Also intact pupils may benefit from the inclusive education under a good leadership (Matuška, O., Jablonský, T., 2010, pp. 128 – 129).

In the sense of so called „higher principle“, each man (an extraordinary as well as an intact) contributes to the progress of society while the disadvantaged are accepted without any conditions that means, the way they are. By acceptance we declare them equal and by the fact we help them we also enrich ourselves. This way they merge with the community and also the personal progress of each participant of this system is gained (Leonhardt, A., Lechta, V., Schmidová, M., Kováčová, B., 2007).

The aim of the modern education is to create such an environment which would provide the same chance to gain the adequate degree of education to all pupils and guarantee them the right to develop their individual skills. The rules and aims of the education of pupils with special educational needs are:

- an equal approach to the education;
- considering of educational needs of the individual;
- free primary or secondary education;
- possibility of the whole life education (Průcha, J., 2009, p. 444).

What L. Požár emphasises (2006) and what we fully accept is that the real concept of inclusion should prepare not only the people with special nurture-and-educational needs, but also intact people for the life in society where people with various disabilities have always been and obviously they will always be.

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