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(2005-2010)



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THESIS: Inclusive Education - Education all children and young people together in pre-school establishments and schools

- 1 The concept of integration describes an enriched society where people of all abilities and with all disabilities live and learn together.
- 2 Inclusive education (as with Seguin 1812-1880) is concerned to
 - integrate fully all individuals into society
 - develop the ways in which we educate people and our educational systems to be consistent with this vision of society.

Integrative approaches to teaching and learning are based on a rights model of education. CONDORCETS (1743-1794) statement in the National Assembly in 1789 that each person had the right to appropriately challenging educational experiences including the right of access to higher education, may be regarded as the starting point for this new vision of education. Today these ideas are central to the concept of integration; an attempt to humanise and democratise the educational system and within it teaching and learning practices.
- 3 Integration means that all educational establishments must be designed to be accessible to enable every child to be appropriately challenged as a learner with all other learners. Labels such as handicap or deviant have no place in this educational environment. Neither has the medical model of education which sought to categorise and segregate into special schools children and young people. Instead an integrated educational system is inclusive, promoting the right of every person
 - to participate fully in society
 - to attend their local school or pre-5 establishment with children/young people of the same age, with their neighbours and friends (regionalisation)
 - to be supported educationally and therapeutically as appropriate to particular needs in the local environment (decentralisation).
- 4 The term »handicap« is used to describe the social and economic circumstances for individuals who differ from societies expectations because of a physical or psychological impairment in terms of development, attainment or potential to contribute to the economy. This »handicap« is a construct of society. In educational terms a handicap represents the limitations imposed on an individual by society, eg, where educational opportunities were not made available or where appropriate support was not provided to enable access to educational opportunities. These limitations are imposed as a result of prejudice and may result in an individual being denied access to knowledge or to areas of the curriculum in addition to being segregated from normal social relationships.
- 5 Integration in an educational sense (for both pre-school and school) means that
 - all children and pupils (including those children who have severe profound and complex learning difficulties) will play, learn and work together
 - at their respective developmental levels (taking into consideration their present levels of competence in perception, cognition and behaviour)
 - in cooperation with one another
 - within the curriculum (project/subject matter/tasks/topic)

Inclusive education means working together within a community.

6 Integration provides inclusive education:

- inclusive in that it involves teaching children and adolescents who are at different developmental levels. In this context educationalist seek to develop confidences in perception, cognition and behaviour without social exclusion.
- Young people learn together is child-centred recognising the individuality of each person (in the sense of his or her unique past experiences) and thus the heterogeneity of every human group. Teaching is thus concerned to identify the achievements of each child and from there to identify the next steps in learning for each individual child.
- A broad and balanced curriculum which includes all learners in the entire social and curricular experience. Such experiences are central for each person including appropriate strategies to support learning and teaching.

That means

- to provide rather than to remove
- to take action rather than to treat (in a medical context)
- to take appropriate educational actions to support the learning of each individual based on their own needs rather than to segregate children/pupils.

The implication of this is that there is no need to create different kinds of schools for perceived different kinds of children, eg, mainstream schools and special schools.

7 If integration is to become a reality then there are fundamental principles which must be part of the educational process:

- inner differentiation; the recognition that each person has an individual educational profile with strengths and areas for development. Education is concerned to identify appropriate next steps in learning for each individual (humanist education).
- cooperative activity; each person is responsible not only for their own learning but for the learning of the social group within the context of the curriculum (democratic education).

The shared topic described in inclusive education refers principally to the process upon which all education is based (in the sense of the »elemental« and the »fundamental« in Klafki's theory of education, where he describes categories of the world as object and subject).

8 Inclusive education is therefore

- democratic because all children/pupils have access to all learning experiences
- humane, because every child or pupil is enabled to learn in his or her own way in an inclusive context supported by necessary aids, both material and personal.

Inclusive education is not based on the concept of an individual curriculum (ie a separate curriculum designed for children with different learning disabilities). The central concept in inclusive education is that the curriculum becomes individualised to the needs of all learners. Active project based learning is one key approach for this kind of open classroom instruction enables

- that each child can participate actively and can influence thinking of others
- that the action of one person influences the actions of others
- thus enabling each child/pupil to support the learning of one another
- that every child/pupil has the experience of being a valued and competent member of the group, ie, he/she builds up an identity with other people with whom he/she is working.

A person needs a "YOU" to become an "I" (Martin Buber).

9 Integrative education in practice has certain requirements

- the principle of community: All children and young people have the right to attend a pre-school or school in their own neighbourhood. (Community related education is organised within the immediate environment of the children.)
- the principle of decentralisation: Children and young people receive personal and practical

help where they live and learn. This help is not provided in an isolated fashion but is embedded in shared learning experiences with peers.

- the principle of shared learning: In this context the skills of learning support teachers and specialist teachers are integrated in ways which enable all members of the teaching team to enhance their skills across a range of different disciplines and circumstances.
 - the principle of multi-disciplinary teams: In this context particular needs of individual young people, educational and therapeutic, are met in the context of the normal teaching and learning environment. This may mean that therapeutic support becomes an enabling force in educational experiences. This in turn enhances the child's motivation. Finally therapeutic actions may also serve to support the wider learning of all children.
- 10 There may be particular challenges in inclusive education where behaviours of an individual may appear to be »pathological« and »disturbed«. Often such behaviour has been developed given the context of the previous experiences of the individual, ie, it represents rational behaviour. In such circumstances through particular therapies and teaching and learning approaches, programmes may be developed to enable new behavioural patterns to be developed with the aim of improving the control of reality held by the individual, ie, working towards greater levels of independence and stability of identity for the individual using the same strengths areas for development next step model as is appropriate for all learners.

What is »special« about this approach to teaching and learning is not that it separates children and young people but rather that it is based on a deep understanding of human development and human learning - an approach to learning and teaching which begins from the needs of the individual. It is the identification of these fundamental principles of teaching and learning which present what is special in this area of education. It would be appropriate to characterise the special nature of activities as representing special children.

In this context we have much to learn from the history of education. In special education there will be no way to integration without integration; not to practice integration will always result in selection and segregation. In education at present there are many models of education which are labelled "integration" but these models are not truly integrative as suggested in this paper-, the cooperative model (Koop-Modell) and the model of remedial centres (Förderzentren) with pupils. Integration is both the means and the end: the goal and the way to achieve this goal!

Bibliography:

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