

Canons of Dialogue in Inclusive Education

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Contemporary social policy, to minimize social exclusion of disabled people, moves towards social inclusion. It expresses itself in legal acts and activities solving the problem of universality of access to education and leveling the playing field in terms of education of the disabled. Departing from education of segregation for mass schools and integration departments contained therein is one of the main ways of implementing social integration and normalization. It is more and more common to waive from distincting educational institutions only for the disabled students for the adaptation of kindergartens and mass schools. The inclusion assumes creating a strong feeling of communion and solidarity between children – pupils in general, keeping the rights of the disabled for their natural development and fulfilling the need of building social networks. According to the assumption of inclusive education, a disabled child goes to a kindergarten or public school ready to accept every pupil, regardless his/her individual differences or an adjudicating document. Inclusion could be understood and analyzed in three ways. The first way of understanding of inclusion in education is broadening the assignments of a mass school which accepts pupils with development deficits. The second way is primarily creating fundamentals for functioning of an inclusive society in agreement with the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education of 1994*. The third way would mean implementing a radical reform of the system of education towards higher quality of functioning of the school through fulfilling the special needs of disabled pupils, not only their educational needs.

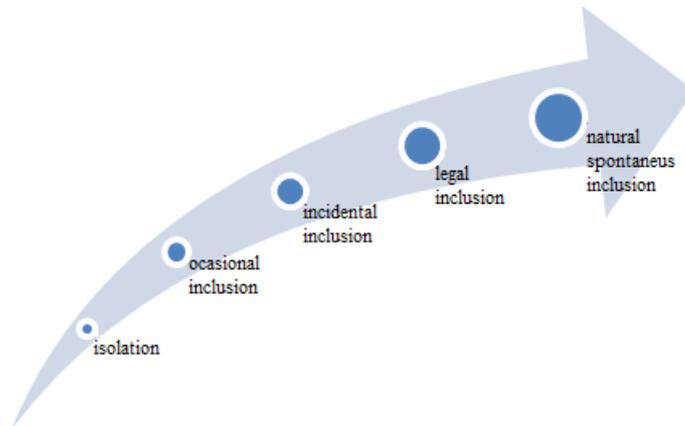
According to *Zamkowska* (2004), inclusive education is a movement for broadening the range of activity of a regular school to the extent that it is able to accept pupils with wider variety of needs and possibilities of development. The inclusion understood in such a way assumes the coexistence of two kinds of conditions: outward and inward conditions. The outward conditions are: the state of development of an individual, the predispositions and abilities he/she has got, motivation, inborn and learnt skills, habits, needs, abilities to create a positive image of the world and of oneself as an important element (compare Bielecki, 1990). The outward condition is the so-called pro-integration atmosphere that is the educational

environment and its impact on forming appropriate attitude of society towards the disabled. *M. John and P. Baylis (2002)* express an opinion that inclusion is something more than integration. They reject the traditional attitude toward the disabled and propose to understand disability as part of human experience, tearing it as a central matter in planning services for people. According to the authors, the inclusive system is a sign of the rights of an individual and it guarantees equality.

The considerations presented allow us to understand inclusive education as *"a process of common education of pupils with special educational needs together with their able peers in a public school. The condition of effectiveness of this process is assuring complete feeling of belonging to the school society as well as such a psychosocial, methodological, organizational, technical assistance which will allow the fulfillment of their special development and educational needs resulting from their individual development"* (Głodkowska, 2010:74). The process of inclusive education understood in such a way means a whole range of actions connected with the personality of teachers, parents specialists, decision-makers, as well as in connection with the attitude towards their own work and the pupil with special educational needs. The dynamics of the process assumes the need for changes in the axiology, in terms of improving teacher competence in its broad sense and legal regulations for psychological and pedagogical aid. Inclusion is a very complex social and educational process, the purpose of which is *"providing pupils of special educational needs with possibilities of fulfilling their development tasks and functioning in a wider community with a feeling of belonging to it"* (Głodkowska, 2010:74).

Inclusive education as a process could start from full isolation/exclusion through occasional, incidental inclusion to inclusion which is regulated by law, legally assuring support in the process of forming the competence of special needs pupils until including them as part of a natural process of inclusion.

Figure. Reference: Own elaboration.



Social inclusion is the basic aim of social policy and a condition for realizing inclusive education. It has to be perceived as an optimal state of the society to which lead two complimentary processes. First is a smooth inclusion of the disabled into groups and social institutions which function normally, the second is forming attitude of openness and tolerance towards the disabled in other social categories. The aim of social inclusion is creating conditions for development of a varied community in a natural social environment, creating occasions to work, learn, and spend free time. According to *L. Ploch* (2011) this process applies not only to the organization of mass schools and kindergartens but also to special needs schools and kindergartens. The author highlights the need for cooperation of special needs schools and kindergartens with wide social environment, especially in terms of self-realization. According to the author, *"special needs institution should form in its pupils the abilities needed for normal functioning in their future lives with care and thoughtful effort. The activity of the pupils is given a certain direction which will mean a systematic, spontaneous cultural, artistic, social and professional activity"* (Ploch, 2011:37). Social inclusion understood in such a way, while organizing in schools and special needs institutions various activities such as motor expression, verbal expression, musical expression, artistic expression, expression through games, technical expression, expression through sports or through making friends, will foster various expressions of integration and activity for the community and the environment (Ploch, 2011:304-305).

Inclusive education as a process should go through thoroughly prepared stages. The first stage ought to be psychological and pedagogical work leading toward teaching educators, parents and pupils appropriate attitudes and ideas important in a dialogue and

coexistence, as well as appropriate knowledge about disability. That is the fundamental of real actions connected with adapting the environment of mass schools to special difficulties of disability.

According to the UNESCO document, *"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 improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner in his/her learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience"* (UNESCO, 2009:7-9).

The goal of inclusive education is widening the access to education, promoting full membership of all pupils endangered with exclusion in the educational system, and supporting the possibility of using the pupils' potential. Participation in the public educational system should mean: appropriate preparation of all teachers, active engagement of all pupils into fully understood didactic process, supporting parents and forming pro-social attitudes and ideas in them, choosing effective teaching methods including alternative educational paths, working out a team-work attitude which would engage the pupils, their parents, peers, other teachers working in the school, supporting staff and some members of a team of different specialists, choosing the grading system which supports the process of learning and takes into consideration a holistic perspective of evaluating pupils' progress, working out Individual Educational-Therapeutic Plan to serve a specific group of pupils who need a more specialized intervention in their learning process.

Inclusive education is a dynamic, multifaceted and multidirectional process. The process of revising the policy and legislation in connection with inclusive education is regularly controlled in many countries. The problems and trends of this type of education were clearly defined in the form of European-level priorities for education by The Council of Europe in 2000. The image of inclusive education, as well as policy and practice connected to it are being changed all the time in all countries (Watkins, 2007:20). *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education* has carried out a project aiming at laying out a set of indicators describing inclusive education which would monitor the advances of inclusive education on the level of education policy and practice. 23 countries took part in the project: *Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Spain, Holland, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, the Great Britain, and Italy*. The indicators for inclusive education were connected with such areas as: legislation, practical solutions, and monitoring inclusive education. The set of indicators proposed should be applicable both on the national and European level.

There is no unity when it comes to deciding which institutions should be treated as inclusive. The project has accepted the following working definition of an inclusive school: Inclusive schools are *“educational settings where pupils with special needs follow the largest part of the curriculum in the mainstream class alongside peers without special educational needs”* (Meijer, 2003:9). However, there is a wide range of institutions and types of services in different countries, which makes it difficult to compare the situation of special needs pupils in different parts of Europe. Each country is in its own place on the path to inclusive education marked out by the Salamanca Statement, according to which *“regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimate the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system”* (UNESCO, 1994:3).

The international conclusion is that the most important and essential areas for analyzing the indicators, according to *M. Kyriazopoulou and H. Weber* (2009:25-26) are:

1. Legislation, balance and coherence between inclusive education and other directions of educational policy.
2. Clearly defined national policy in terms of inclusive education. It is connected with the appropriate standpoint of national education authorities when it comes to dividing pupils into groups/grades according to their abilities and skills as well as the connection between public and special needs school system and preventing the appearance of SEN.
3. The value system as a point of reference for curricula and certificates.
4. The inclusive grading system which would use forming evaluation adequate to individual abilities.
5. Participation of pupils and parents in making decisions.
6. Systematic connection between inclusive education and early intervention.
7. Factors motivating the development of inclusive education.
8. Financing and processes connected with the mode of action.
9. Co-section cooperation.
10. Interdisciplinary aid system.
11. Occupational training for teachers and other specialists.
12. Systems or environments which support teachers' cooperation and team work.
13. Education concerned with differences, diversity and multiculturalism in a class.
14. Systems allowing for holding the responsible into account.

The very term “inclusive education” is being changed. Nowadays, it is understood as education including much wider group of pupils than just those with certified special needs. Inclusive education could be seen as an attempt to go one step forward than merely accepting the pupil to the regional school where pupils share the physical space but do not always follow the same curriculum as their peers. Inclusive education means also that pupils with special needs have got the curriculum adequate to their individual abilities (Watkins, 2007).

The above could be summarized with two canons of inclusive education as a multi-faceted process. These are subjectivity and dialogism. Both terms have got a very wide meaning. Subjectivity of an individual in his/her interpersonal relations must be analyzed in such spheres as: individuality, uniqueness, exceptionality, singularity but also such as: integrity, community, dialogism. These mean that the person functions in the space of his own I as well as in the space of I – OTHERS. Subjectivity thus seen is certainly an attribute of a dialogue being with the OTHER, being in the world, where the dynamics of the changes taking place make us face new challenges, duties, contradictions and ambiguities. The goal of pedagogical activity for contemporary education is to support the development of young person's subjectivity, his/her autonomy, and teaching him/her cooperation with others. The subjectivity of a disabled person in terms of inclusive education should be in agreement with personalized pedagogy which is concerned with the value of the person. The search should lead to being interested in a personal lifestyle which often becomes evident in the context of difficulties and problems.

Education plays an important role in the life of an individual. It gives tasks which, in the process of cooperation, enhance changes in the person and in the world. Education in that sense is closer to the education of a dialogue. This means that the basis of the process of learning is first of all the relationship between humans, that is, living in an interpersonal community. It is also the major indicator of the pedagogy of dialogue.

The philosophy of dialogue seen as searching for otherness, distinctness, creates so-called pedagogy of difference within the pedagogy of dialogue (Milerski, 2008). It means that distinctness is not an undesirable characteristic, but rather that it is constructive and enriching the experience of people's relations. The process of bringing up is a form of a dialogue determined by authenticity leading to a meeting. The above considerations allow us to perceive the *dialogue* in education as a *way of being* and not as a teaching method preparing for life. A dialogue thus seen means a cognitive contact of the subjects of education, which furthers understanding and self-understanding as well as experience. It includes equally teachers and pupils as people experiencing. On both sides of the pedagogical

process there are not the pedagogue and the learner but rather the people. And so it is a *human vis-a-vis a human*. If both the teacher and the learner are humans, then we could say that they are bringing up each other. The attitude of a dialogue expresses itself in a permanent readiness to *treat the other human being as a person, as a goal in itself, not as a means to reach that goal*. It means that the *teacher* in an educational dialogue is a person with specific competences, who is *for the pupil and not with the pupil*. Only in such a setup we can talk about *being together and not being near*.

In a dialogue thus seen there should be experiencing of yourself and Others, being with yourself and with Others, a cognitive meeting with yourself and Others while preserving the uniqueness in the presence of the other one. The educational dialogue requires discovering the humanity of yourself and the Other, while fully accepting the partner of the dialogue and giving yourself away. The subjects meet on different stages of life and with different experience. Some of them have had times of a quiet existence, while others have had to cope with troubles and adversities and that can influence their relations during the meeting. The most common situation is when one side needs help, and that is the pupil. In such a case, in a dialogue seen as a meeting, the aim of the teacher is Getting to know, Understanding, and Being Together. The intention of each level of the dialogue in the *Dialogue Model* (Al-Khamisy, 2013) is:

To get to know means to acquire as much information as we can about ourselves and the Other in order to have a dialogue. The conditions of getting to know well is autonomy at the starting point: freedom from prejudices and openness.

To understand means to recognize and outline your and the other person's possibilities, strong points and limitations. To understand means to put yourself in someone else's position, to experience in your imagination something the other person goes through in reality. The condition for understanding is empathy. To understand also means to initiate new relations with Others.

To be together means to create partnership in full acceptance of the other person, that is, being *for the Other, and not being with the Other*. But mere being together does not mean the end of a dialogue. For on this level await new issues and doubts which arouse interest and start anew the process of getting to know, and through that – enrichment. The level of Being Together in education of a dialogue should thus be manifested by: realizing the inclusive policy, meeting the needs of the disabled pupils, cooperation with other specialists, parents, other staff members in a kindergarten or a school for meeting the needs of a child, constructive and meditative activity in a team and realizing its aims, which are: formulating enjoined forms, modes of action and the deadlines of giving a pupil psychological and

pedagogical help (Al-Khamisy, 2013). Being together provokes altering interactions and giving tasks adjusted to the Other's abilities. Thus, there appears mutual help and support. The presence of other people in a person's life is a great value for them, gives them sense of security and satisfaction, especially in difficult moments. Subjectivity and dialogue, as two basic canons, formulate the following tasks for inclusive education:

- recognising the child in different areas of his/her existence in order to support his/her development;
- evaluating the level of knowledge and experience in terms of special educational needs to use them in a specific situation;
- forming individual programmes for specific pupils and not for a universal model pupil;
- introducing actions in the sphere of the closest development, which allows for a real and not apparent development support;
- respecting the right to be wrong in search or action;
- treating the pupil in a multifaceted and wide-ranging way as a subject of education;
- cooperation of the teacher with the pupil not to evaluate and classify him/her but to help him/her in arranging experiences and building up knowledge;
- performing a diagnostic-prognostic function for a child.

The above model of inclusive education, often called *Education for Everyone*, will be as real and functioning as it will have the following characteristics in its structure and reality:

- subjectivity expressed by concentrating on the pupil, teacher, parents, giving them the possibility to fulfill the need to have impact and the feeling of belonging;
- the dynamics and strengthening the power and motivation existing in everyone to overcome difficulties despite the existing limitations;
- comprehensiveness which takes into consideration various social contexts and conditions dependent from different environments where the human development is taking place all the time;
- flexibility which is ability to modify the educational space of the pupil because of his/her individual abilities;
- meditative attitude, that is, readiness for changes, rejecting stereotypes, searching for other effective solutions for the pupil's development;
- pedagogical optimism which means positive thinking, concentration on effects, and building up faith in crossing the boundaries of the possibilities of development through "small steps";
- professionalism meaning high level of competence of all people working with the pupil;

- integration favoring joining not dividing, including Otherness in other Otherness, getting to know diversity without exclusion in search for things that join and not those that divide.

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