

THE APPROACH OF THE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

D. MARA¹, BLANCA GRAMA²

^{1,2}University „Lucian Blaga” of Sibiu

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Abstract: The reality and the dynamics of the social, economical and cultural life together with the new challenges of the contemporary world have led to wide changes in designing and implementing the educational politics and strategies in most countries around the world. In this context, the problem of inclusive education for children with special educational needs has become a primary field of action for specialists in our school system, based on promoting the principles of education for everyone and harmonizing the lives of people with special needs. Moving towards the contemporary society has been characterized by a change in the attitude of the community towards the people with specific problems. Within the groups and categories of people with special needs, the ones with physical and psychological disabilities represent a special entity that needs complex socio-psycho-pedagogical services. From these considerations, assisting people with special needs represents a complex practical activity that includes: the prevention, the detection, the diagnosis, the therapy, the recovery, the education, the school and professional orientation and monitoring the later evolution of the person in difficulty. To accomplish the purposes with such a degree of responsibility, the requirement is the psychological, educational, medical, legal and social training of the teachers employed in educating the children with special needs.

Cuvinte cheie: prevenție, depistare, diagnostic, terapie, recuperare, educare, orientare școlară și profesională, integrare socială

Rezumat: Realitatea și dinamica vieții sociale, economice, culturale și noile provocări ale lumii contemporane au impus ample modificări în proiectarea și implementarea politicilor și strategiilor educaționale din majoritatea statelor lumii. În acest context, problematica incluziunii/integrării școlare a copiilor cu cerințe educative speciale a devenit un domeniu prioritar de acțiune și pentru specialiștii din sistemul nostru de învățământ, în baza promovării principiilor educației pentru toți și a armonizării vieții persoanelor cu cerințe speciale. Trecerea la societatea contemporană a fost caracterizată de o schimbare în atitudinea comunității față de persoanele cu probleme specifice. În cadrul grupurilor și categoriilor de persoane cu nevoi speciale, cei cu dizabilități fizice și psihice reprezintă o entitate aparte care necesită servicii complexe sociopsihopedagogice. Din aceste considerente asistența persoanelor cu cerințe speciale constituie o activitate practică complexă care include: prevenția, depistarea, diagnosticul, terapia, recuperarea, educarea, orientarea școlară și profesională, integrarea socială și monitorizarea evoluției ulterioare a persoanei aflate în dificultate. Pentru realizarea scopurilor cu un asemenea grad de responsabilitate este necesară formarea psihologică, pedagogică, medicală, juridică și socială a profesorilor angajați în educarea copiilor cu nevoi speciale.

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE OF THEORETICAL PREDOMINANCE

Within the last decade, the efforts of the educational system to undergo a profound restructuring became visible, and were destined to change the grid values of the education in agreement with the democratization of the entire society, where assuring the right to education for all children (art. 28 from the Convention of Children's Rights) and equalizing their chances for success have represented and continue to represent the essential objectives. One of these challenges is the need to change the vision about the children with special educational needs and to offer them a normal life through the transformation of the social representations and giving up labeling and stigma. In this context, studying the developing features of children with special educational needs in order to determine new educational strategies – better adapted to their needs and therefore more efficient – has become one of the priorities for preparing specialists in the field of special psycho pedagogy (Vrășmaș, 2000).

The current Romanian educational system cannot ignore or leave out the study of the development characteristics of students and also identifying new educational strategies better adapted to their needs, regardless of the student categories to which they are addressed to. Starting from the principles of this new orientation in educational practices, we have the possibility to intervene in order to improve adverse representations that exist within the public opinion, about children with disabilities or with learning difficulties, by giving up labeling and stigma and by offering equal chances for their community and social integration.

Through certain open and flexible educational practices we can demonstrate that these children have aptitudes and learning capacities that need to be valued at maximum, and that they can be useful to society through what they can or could do, with the condition to benefit from a school environment where the majority would accept them and understand the particularities of their evolution and development. Accepting and integrating them with the „normal” students offers the

¹Corresponding Author: D. Mara, 33, Reșița street, Sibiu, România; e-mail: danielmara11@yahoo.com; tel +40-0722455513
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possibility to defend and sustain the right of these people to education and assistance in accordance with the potential that they have, together with eliminating marginalization and social segregation (Ungureanu, 2000).

Teaching activities – teaching within the inclusive education

Children with learning difficulties need to have their learning organized in accordance with their educational needs. This type of problem requires the following complex actions from the educators and teachers, actions that are referring to the whole class, so to all children: knowing the children, their individuality and differences; individualizing the learning; using flexible and open strategies; arranging properly the educational environment, so that it becomes an intervention factor in learning and in reducing the learning problems; Valuing the social relations at class level and school level in favor of the learning process and promoting learning through cooperation and educational partnership. The primary requirement of learning is individualizing the methods used for children with learning difficulties. It is necessary that the teachers know and that they are able to use a series of teaching strategies. In this case it is desired that the class educator follows the following requirements: knowing well the difficulties of learning of each student, their way of manifesting and the field where they appear; making sure that the students that are in a difficult situation have the skills that are required in advance; adapting the educational material they use for each assignment; buying support materials when needed; making time each hour to evaluate the efficacy of the teaching and learning activities.

Under these circumstances the care of the educator is underlined in organizing learning situations for all students, including the ones with difficulties.

The issue of developing a simulative and adequate learning environment is addressed, also for the ones that receive an additional intervention outside of the class.

There are general requirements towards organizing teaching and learning in a regular class where we find children with learning difficulties (Popovici, 1999):

- these children need a detailed multi-sensory learning to make them advance; there's no case for wasting time with repetitive activities over some things that they have learned already, but to change methods and learning materials more often;

- children with learning difficulties need adequate initiation in reading and writing, which implies most of the time the use of other methods and means than the ones used regularly by the educator of a specific class;

- There is a need for structuring the knowledge and a good orientation to carry out the school learning. As these children have difficulties in organizing the information that comes from their senses, they are often incapable to predict and therefore they must be given an adequate and structured setting in class, always being informed of what's about to follow;

- building a positive self representation is another need of children with learning difficulties. This can be done on a basis of group activities oriented towards valuing everyone's possibilities and on a system of positive relations between teacher and student and in between students. Those relations must offer the ground for mutual trust, empathy with one's feelings, sharing emotions, feelings, concerns and learning experiences;

- learning new teaching methods and techniques, of presenting ideas from a subject constitutes another requirement that the educator can accomplish in a regular class;

- students with learning difficulties need teachers that understand their way of learning, can adapt to their rhythm and can orient them to overcome the difficulties without

disregarding them.

The attitude and action of the teacher towards the students with learning difficulties is determined by the understanding of the following fundamental thesis of the field under discussion: each student is unique and has his value, no matter what problems he has in the learning process. Learning is unique with every student, depending on: style, rhythm, level of learning and development, self characteristics, aptitudes, expectations, previous experience.

The student comes to school with a certain learning style, according to previous experience. This style can be not the most efficient style for him. The role of the educator is to identify the most efficient style, which suits the student and helping the student use it. He can accomplish this by considering the fact that we remember that information that has an emotional relevance and capture the attention. On the other hand, the acquired skills need to be broken and there's a need for building other skills. The effort is smaller to memorize events that are important for a certain subject.

The inclusive strategies of learning-teaching

By using the teaching strategies in an inclusive way, any teacher can assure the resources needed to prevent and solve some of the learning problems of students.

We would like to clarify now this new concept of the 90s: inclusive learning strategies.

We noticed that in between the basic resources of the educator, teacher or primary teacher in the regular class, a special place is taken by this type of teaching strategies. They are bound by the curriculum method of approaching learning difficulties. Inclusion is not just a superior phase of school integration of children with special educational requirements, but it refers to another manner of approach, that has two types of activities dedicated to the education of all children in the same educational setting:

1. Preventing the situations of miss adaptation;

2. Treating the learning difficulties within the regular school environment. Inclusion, process that characterizes the inclusive school or the school for all children, has emerged as a challenge towards the change in attitudes, prejudices and mentalities as well as politics and practices of exclusion and separation (Mara, 2009).

No matter how good is the institutionalization form and intervention over the child with a deficiency, incapacity or disorder in a part of the organic or functional development of its personality, by participating separated within the educational system we discriminate the student. There are changes within the image the child has about the world and about himself. Labeling children as handicapped or deficient is a separation and discrimination method – in a positive way (too many support resources), or in a negative way (social contempt). The effects in the child's personality are most of the times frustrating and take a long time. Education for all children, inclusive education, is forming itself more and more as the most suitable approach, to understand and satisfy the learning needs of children in regular schools (Ghergut, 2001).

a. The dimensions of the inclusive strategies

In a multi cultural perspective of the human diversity and respect over the fundamental rights of the child and man in general, it has certain characteristic dimensions:

- There's an approach for all children, with no exception;
- All children can come across problems during the learning process at certain times;
- Learning problems vary a lot, from simple changes to complex deficiencies;
- Children do not have defects, but problems in learning and adapting;

ESSAYS

- The idea that some children cannot be educated or are not recoverable is eliminated from the start
- All children have something to say today and can bring their contribution in the adult world of tomorrow
- The educational environment is common
- The educational offers are simulating for everyone in different degrees;
- Differences are valued and used as means for education
- Learning problems are considered natural and solving them is done by using all human resources and materials offered by the educational system, promoting the unity of relations and resources in favor of the child;
- In the middle of the educational process we have the child with its features and not its problem;
- Children can learn together through educational partnership and through the efficient use of the teaching strategies;
- Not only children adapt to school, but the school needs changes to correspond to the special educational requirements of all children.

In order to identify and solve the learning difficulties, this curriculum vision determines the need to apply some adequate strategies, inclusive ones. During the 90s pedagogy, techniques were developed and methods and practices that started from the traditional methods adapted to respond to achieve the objectives described by the education for all.

b. The system of action for inclusive strategies

The inclusive strategies refer to the new orientation and efficient of the teaching strategies. It's the inclusive usage of participative and active methods of teaching: the student's participation in the development of self knowledge, learning through discovery, personal initiative, problematization, personal reflection, heuristic conversation, role playing, brainstorming. School is best to assume the promotion of this pedagogy and to promote it in relationship with family and community.

Forming children in an inclusive manner corresponds, no matter their physical, organic or functional attributes, with the following requirements: individual needs of valuing of every child; social needs of getting involved, participating and developing social relations.

c. The inclusive school model

In the perspective of the inclusive school as a school that opens flexible to all children, learning difficulties are considered normal problems within the teaching activity.

The solution to these problems is an opportunity and a challenge for teachers, students, school managers and the other factors involved. Each educational act is a pressure for the child and needs to be completed with adequate support. In order to solve different problems we meet in educational learning, perfecting the school, the teacher and the educational partnership with the family and the community are factors that need to be involved.

Teachers need to start solving the problems in class from the following actions that determine the inclusive manner:

Student: knowing individuality in a global way and around certain components that prove the need to intervene; detecting areas of difficulty especially when they are intermittent or temporary.

Group: knowing relations from its class; using negotiation techniques, cooperating, collaborating, communicating, in group activities;

Self: using the experience in a reflexive and empathetic manner;

-collaborating with the other teachers and the school manager; being informed constantly about practices and new

theories and finding motivation to implement them in their activities.

School management and the social-educational context, that includes the school, the family and the community refers to the following requirements:

- openness and understanding towards new experiences and change in general;
- encouraging sharing the experiences and exchanging ideas and practices;
- educational partnership between professionals and other adults (teachers and deciding factors from the community);
- permanent search for material and spiritual resources for support in the school learning activity;
- Professional partnership between different educational factors: teachers, psychologists, counselors, doctors, social assistants.
- Emotional support and professional encouragement of teachers that have outstanding problems to solve.

The instruments used by all these factors are inclusive strategies, comprehensive for teaching and learning.

d. The characteristics of the inclusive strategies

Using inclusive strategies in class has the following basic requirements:

- students must learn in class using the internal and external resources proposed by the teacher and the other students ;
- the learning process is more important than the results obtained on short term;
- learning must be effective and efficient for the student and for the teacher;
- learning is more important than teaching
- learning problems in students are natural and they become impulses to perfect teaching strategies for the future;
- considering diversity in students, each child is important and unique no matter the school results;
- to answer the needs of each child, the strategy of individualized learning comes forward;
- the educational partnership constitutes a form of expression for efficient relations of teaching and learning as well as a necessary support of the educational process from within and from outside;
- the teaching process is backed up by valuing the external resources of teaching – educational environment – with its experiential direct and indirect messages ;
- the internal resources that back up the learning process come from the empathy manifested between the teacher and the student and from valuing life experiences in learning and teaching.

These requirements have the power of fundamental thesis and constitute the starting point to choose methods for learning and teaching. They are in fact the thesis of the inclusive school for all students.

The characteristics of the inclusive strategies, as strategies that are addressed to all children and that touch and solve everyone's learning problems, are as follow: flexibility; efficacy; efficiency; diversity; dynamics; interactions and cooperation; creativity; globalism; interdisciplinary.

The flexibility of the strategies is referring to the possibility to change and restructure according to the requirements and needs of the learning process and its evaluation. The teacher must be able to change the initial intention, planned and structured before the learning, if the evaluation defines this need. If we observe that the students of a class are not paying attention to the theme or the previous theme was not consolidated, the teacher can give up the planned ones and in a flexible way make those learning situations that the

children need. Also, planning the methodology must take into account more possibilities because the reaction of the children is not always the predicted one. The efficient teacher is the one that does not get upset with the class because it didn't understand a certain lesson, but is looking for other methods of teaching and learning.

The effectiveness requires the strategies to operate directly, actionably and with immediate results in learning. It requires a flexible use of resources. Learning resources in class come from the teacher and the students. That's why by using the educational time in an efficient way, as teaching and learning time, becomes a requirement. The effectiveness is determined as a unity between teaching-learning and evaluation. It involves the use of participative active methods. Students are involved in action and they learn from it. Teaching and learning go together in the unity of educational time. The way to work must be based on experience (based on students' experience) and the evaluation is done permanently as a component of the process, as a moment to continue teaching and self-evaluation becomes a nodal point in learning. Both the evaluation of products and of the learning process is emphasized. The materials used for help become work instruments for the teacher and for the student, determining participating together within the educational process. The effort of the student is geared towards a relative independence from action, to work with the knowledge, skills and abilities from previous and present experience. The effectiveness comes also from the fact that gearing the student's efforts towards action, the teacher can move freely in class, can provide support where needed and can observe everyone's progress.

The efficiency of the inclusive strategies is determined by the requirement that this type of educational approach corresponds with efficient actions for both the student and the teacher. Efficient learning is a learning that takes a lot of time, with direct results over the level of development, it is dynamic and it constitutes itself as a component that builds personality. The efficiency is tied to forming the student and continuously perfecting the teacher. It establishes an optimal report between the effort and its results, between the performance and capacity. Efficient learning creates internal motivation for subsequent learning.

The dynamics of the strategies is determined by the need to change, to seek solutions and spontaneity, within the educational process. The requirements of learning are elements to modify the initial intentions and improvisation, and tend to occupy the place of a rigorous planning. This does not mean lack of planning or giving up planning, on the contrary it is equivalent with preparing more alternatives to solve learning situations, at a given point. Although the educational actions must be seen with clear and certain steps, planning should be open to more possibilities for action.

The creativity that characterizes these strategies is referring to the fact that in inclusive learning we can accept as solutions all ideas that come from children, without rejection or punishment. Children must understand through their own judgment and action why a solution is good and another one is not.

The interaction and cooperation that belongs to comprehensive strategies, is referring to the need to cultivate social relations, as a resource to learn within the class. In class, the interactions between children exist as a rich resource for learning. It depends on how the teacher identifies, stimulates and orients the social relations from the school group, so that these become a factor for facilitating learning for everyone. Learning through cooperation, negotiating the objectives of learning and solutions to solve some problems, listening and accepting

opinions, making decisions together, all constitute active moments of teaching and learning in class.

The globalism is the feature that refers to the way of approaching children's personalities from the class. Learning is considered globally, as an instrument to adapt the children to the school and social life. Simply memorizing is not an educational strategy; the cognitive aspects must be completed with the emotional-motivational ones and eventually with the language and psycho-motricity ones, to complete the act of learning. A child memorizes easier, another needs more movement and gestures to memorize, and another one has qualities in thinking and is very sensitive. A certain emotion is expressed through words at a student, at another it is seen just from the shiver in the voice and at another it is very low. The learning task must be created in global terms that can be individualized with every student. Evaluation will take into consideration everyone's characteristics and global personality, effort and involvement.

The interdisciplinary of the strategies of the inclusive school comes from the fact that they are interactive, participatory, heuristic, and experiential, they lead to discovery and problematization, being applied in all school disciplines.

Accepting the diversity of the students, we accept the diversity of life solutions, for a world that is hard to anticipate. We must be open to all solutions. This needs to reach the children, as a strategy to learn (Preda, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

Synthesizing the characteristics of the inclusive strategies of learning, we can say that they value each student and give the teacher the freedom to understand the complexity and diversity of the didactic solution through positive images about any child and about self. One of the fundamental rights of the child is to be sustained in valuing to the maximum its own capacities, and that represents the criteria of equal chances in education and that can be realized under the circumstances of a differentiate approach, not isolated or separated. The special educational requirements rapport themselves to the support provided to the child, in order to overcome the difficulties that arise and that represent obstacles in the process of social adaptation.

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