Inclusion and mainstreaming: a journey

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For many, the concept of inclusion remains somewhat vague. What does inclusion actually mean? What does it look like? Is it the same as full inclusion or mainstreaming? A general historical synopsis of the development of special education services will be presented, focusing later on the models designed for second or foreign languages. This will be followed by a clarification of terms. The paper concludes with a short discussion of implications for educational practitioners and district policy makers in EFL/ESL settings. Finally, in addition to the list of references cited in the article, a list of other resources is included below for those interested in further investigation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the history of civilization, people with disabilities, not long ago called handicapped, have received many different kinds of treatment. Long ago in some societies, and still a practice in others, children with a disability were allowed to die as infants. The spread of the more caring philosophies, with respect for human life, whether disabled or not, has had a great impact on individuals with disabilities by sheltering and protecting them from those who would do them bodily harm (e.g. Mother Teresa). In some societies, those with specific disabilities were given distinct roles.At one point in the development of care for the disabled, it was decided to establish large hospital and training centers where both the physical and training needs of the individuals could be provided: Home and Hospital, Hospital and Training School, Training Institute, etc. Many of these institutions did not provide individuals with more than custodial care and did not promote their full development. In 1950sBrown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) set the precedent for equality in education for children with disabilities. Hobson v. Hanson (1967) ruled that the

tracking system used to place children was discriminatory. The 1970s Public Law 91230, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments (1970) recognized disabled and exceptional children as a special needs target population. The 1970s Mills v. Board of Education (1972) ruled that children with disabilities had the right to an education. P.L. 93-112, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made provisions to disallow the exclusion of any person with disabilities from vocational programs receiving federal funds. The 1980s P.L. 99-457, Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (1986) extended provisions of P.L. 94 142 to children with disabilities ages 3-5; established a new state grant program for infants and toddlers with disabilities (0-2) and their families.

Definition

Related terms with a longer history include mainstreaming, integration, and normalization. Some use several of these terms interchangeably; others make distinctions. Mainstreaming and other, older terms are sometimes associated primarily with the physical assimilation of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. However, mainstreaming assumes that students with disabilities may share the same physical space (classroom, playground, etc.) with those who have no disabilities only when they are able to do the same activities as everyone else with minimal modifications. Further, some interpret mainstreaming to mean the primary responsibility for these students' education remains with their special education teacher. Rogers (1993) argues that mainstreaming "Has generally been used to refer to the selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes... [Mainstreaming generally assumes] that a student must "earn" his or her opportunity to be mainstreamed through the ability to "keep up" with the work assigned by the teacher to the other students in the class." (p. 1)

Inclusion is a somewhat more values-oriented term than integration. The term inclusion is also used to refer to "the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child ... and requires only that the child will

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benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students) (Rogers, 1993, p. 1)".

Erwin and Rogers stress the idea, held by many inclusion advocates, that students with disabilities should not just be educated with non-disabled peers, but that these educational efforts should be accomplished in the child's neighborhood school. This leads to a commitment to move needed services and resources to the child with a disability rather than to place the child in a more removed or segregated setting where services and resources are located. Inclusion allows daily and weekly time in the school schedule for regular and special educators to collaborate. It seeks to expand the capacity of regular educators to be able to teach a wider variety of children, including those with various disabilities, and to expand the roles of special educators as consultants as well as teachers. Also, in contrast to mainstreaming, the primary responsibility for the education of students with disabilities in an inclusive environment rests with the regular classroom teacher rather than the special education teacher. This does not mean that special educators have no direct involvement in the education of these students, but the classroom teacher in charge has the ultimate responsibility for the education of all students in a classroom.

A limitation for implementing these ideas in any place where learners may need extra attention is the fact that there are too few teachers for too many people. Ideally, students in sheltered instruction should be accompanied by two teachers: One of the teachers is a content specialist and the other is the English teacher (2003: 1). However, policy makers are trying to increase the coverage of education, thus making teachers work with large classes of 25 or 35 students. As Brown expresses it, "institutional constraints are often allied to the sociopolitical considerations. Schools and universities cannot exist in a social vacuum. Public elementary and secondary schools are subject to official national language policy issues." (p. 125) In relation to mainstreaming Brown explains that in some submersion programs, students receive instruction in the L2 before being placed in mainstream courses. The decision of when a learner is ready to move into regular courses is taken by teachers supported merely on tests results (p. 126). Brown also points out that ESL instruction should be

content-centered so that learners can adapt easily.For inclusion to work, educational practices must be learner-centered. Teachers must discover where each of their students are academically, socially, and culturally to determine how best to facilitate learning. Learner-centered teachers see their role more as being facilitators of learning rather than simply transmitters of knowledge. Therefore, skills in curriculum-based assessment, team teaching, mastery learning, assessing learning styles (and modifying instruction to adapt to students' learning styles), other individualized and adaptive learning approaches, cooperative learning strategies, facilitating peer tutoring or social skills training are important for teachers to develop and use in inclusive classrooms.

To summarize these terms as used in the special education literature, mainstreaming generally refers to the physical placement of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. The assumption is that their disabilities can be accommodated with relatively minimal modifications. Integration is primarily a legal term connoting the actual assimilation of different groups together (disabled and non-disabled), rather than just the facilitation of physical proximity. This may require more than minor modifications. Inclusion is the more popular educational term referring to the move to educate all people, especially children. In an inclusive environment, they are taught to the greatest possible extent, together in a regular classroom setting.

Assumptions

Perhaps the strongest argument for inclusion comes from its philosophical and ethical base. Integration activists point to these ideals as valid for those with disabilities, too. In the literature related to inclusion a number of assumptions are made:

The Least Restrictive Environment is to ensure that the individual rights of each disabled student are considered when planning an appropriate educational program, rather than placing all students in a particular program, in particular location, because of an assigned label.Items considered essential to successful inclusion are attitudes and beliefs, services and physical accommodations, school support, collaboration, instructional methods (The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, 1993):Attitudes and Beliefs. The

regular teacher believes that the student can succeed at learning a second language and also the contents of the course . School personnel are committed to accepting responsibility for the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. School personnel and the students in the class have been prepared to receive a student with disabilities. Parents are informed and support program goals. Special education staff is committed to collaborative practice in general education classrooms. Services and Physical Accommodations. Services needed by the student are available (e.g., health, physical, occupational, or speech therapy). Accommodations to the physical plant and equipment are adequate to meet the student's needs (e.g., appropriate learning materials, building facilities).

School support

The principal, the head of the department or any person in charge understands the needs of students with disabilities. Adequate numbers of personnel, including aides and support personnel, are available. Adequate staff development and technical assistance, based on the needs of the school personnel, are being provided (e.g., information on disabilities, instructional methods, awareness and acceptance activities for students, and team building skills). Appropriate policies and procedures for monitoring individual student progress, including grading and testing, are in place. Collaboration. Special educators are part of the instructional or planning team. Teaming approaches are used for problem-solving and program implementation. Regular teachers, special education teachers, and other specialists collaborate (e.g., co-teaching, team teaching, teacher assistance teams).Instructional Methods. Teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to select and adapt curricula and instructional methods according to individual student needs. A variety of instructional arrangements are available (e.g., team teaching, cross-grade grouping, peer tutoring, teacher assistance teams). Teachers foster a cooperative learning environment and promote socialization.

Inclusion Procedures

The literature also provides a set of procedures that need to be take into account when inclusion is implemented: Regular class placement with instructional interventions, involving adaptations of teaching strategies, materials, or testing procedures within the regular classroom.

- Regular class placement with an identified intervention plan, involving seeking assistance among fellow teachers. The team of teachers could develop an intervention plan (pre-referral stage) for a given disabled child.

- Regular class placement with resource and regular education teachers team teaching - the two teachers work collaboratively within the regular class setting, both helping all students. This option has become a preferred variant for helping children within regular education classes.

- Regular class placement with alternative support, involving the fact that disabled students may move out of the regular class to receive additional services.

- Regular class placement with related services designed to assist the disabled student benefit from special education - physical therapy, occupational therapy, guidance counseling, etc.

- Regular class placement with consultation by resource teacher, implying that the special needs student receives regular class instruction with non-disabled students. No resource room placement is involved.

- Regular class placement with periodic assistance in resource room where the disabled student receives part-time services.

- Regular class placement with majority of assistance by resource teacher. The intense instruction by the special education teacher may occur in either the regular class setting or a special class setting.

- Special school placement as a temporary setting when in child's best interest, especially when the child's needs are more severely difficult.If used during school hours, this approach provides contact between child and classroom by simulating the regular

instructional setting - either by having a visiting teacher travel to the student's home, or by using a two-way communication system between the school and the student's home (Wood, 1992).

Specific Research About Inclusion Demographics

Research About Inclusion

There are a number of reviews that consistently report little or no benefit for students when they are placed in special education settings (Madden & Slavin, 1983). However, in 50 studies comparing the academic performance of mainstreamed and segregated students with mild handicapping conditions, the mean academic performance of the integrated group was in the 80th percentile, while the segregated students score was in the 50th percentile (Weiner R., 1985).

A study assessing the effectiveness of inclusion was done at Johns Hopkins University. In a school-wide program called Success For All, student achievement was measured. The program itself is a comprehensive effort that involves family support teams, professional development for teachers, reading, tutoring, special reading programs, eight-week reading assessments, and expanded opportunities for pre-school and kindergarten children. In assessing effectiveness, a control group was compared with the students in Success For All programs. Comparisons were made at first, second, and third grades. Students identified with exceptional education needs were included in all comparisons. While assessments showed improved reading performance for all students, the most dramatic improvements occurred among the lowest achievers. In spite of the fact that these inner city schools have normally high retention problems, only 4% of the fourth graders in the experimental group had ever been held back one or more grades, while the five control schools had 31% who had failed at least one year (Slavin & Madden, 2002).

There was a similar finding in the comparison of attendance rates. The research also found the best results occurred in schools with the highest level of funding. They concluded that when resources are available to provide supplementary aids, all learners do better. While

researchers are cautious in their conclusions, there are some positive signs. In particular, students in special education and regular education showed several positive changes, including: a reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness (Peck et al., 1992), growth in social cognition (Murray-Seegert,1989), improvement in self-concept of non-disabled students (Peck et. al., 1992), development of personal principles and ability to assume an advocacy role toward their peers and friends with disabilities and warm and caring friendships (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989). Research on Success For All and other intensive early intervention programs such as Reading Recovery (Pinnell, 1991) and Prevention of Learning Disabilities (Silver 1989) suggests that there are effective alternatives to remedial approaches.

There is mixed evidence of improved academic performance. Most groups and individuals believe that inclusion in the regular classroom is appropriate and that a continuum of placement options and services must be available. Inclusion in EFL/ESL Settings After this conceptualization about inclusion, education and related terms, let us focus on a more specific aspect of learning which is a current issue: learning a second language.

The teaching - learning process needs to address the issue of quality and coverage in general, but if the field of EFL/ESL is examined, we notice that inclusion goes beyond incorporating people with disabilities to schools. Inclusion is also a social event that deserves some analysis if we consider that some people in ESL situations receive some kind of special education. If we take a look at people learning ESL in the US we have to discuss the role of Content Based Instruction and specifically the sheltered model.

As Davies (2003) affirms, these types of instruction are likely to be found at college level and their goal is to enable learners to cover the same content mainstream students study. This shows, indeed, that an effort is made in order to allow speakers of other languages to access not only the second language, but also relevant contents.

Brown (1994) characterizes Content Based Instruction as a way to include Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in American schools at elementary and secondary levels, but then Brown looks at these models and one might suggest that language learners are included

in the courses physically, but not academically. The first model discussed by Brown is submersion and it simply refers to learners who are taking courses in a foreign language without any special foreign language instruction under the assumption that they will pick up the language. Second on this list is immersion a model where learners have specially-designed courses, share the same L1 and the teacher has knowledge about the regular content areas, the L1 and the L2. This is according to Brown an enriching experience since learners are in an additive bilingual context and they do not feel exclusion at any moment, on the contrary, they are usually supported by parents and society.

The next model, a controversial one, is sheltered English. Mercerize (2000) quoted by Davies explains the use of content based instruction (CBI) and sheltered instruction in terms of the scores students obtain in TEFL tests. It is said that CBI and sheltered instruction can be taught to students with TEFL scores usually in the range 350 to 500. These scores are lower than the required by institutions in English speaking countries. Then students are in a different group in which a mainstream course will be redesigned by making complex concepts easier to understand (p. 108). Here the controversy appears: What may be considered a good thing for the learner is actually a disadvantage. If we imagine that the learner takes a test like the SATs or any other specialized tests, one may wonder who will get a better score, a person in a mainstream course or a person in a sheltered course where concepts have been simplified. As it can be seen, inclusion should not only refer to incorporating people with physical disabilities into the educational system, but also to guarantee that people that have a lower proficiency in a language are not excluded.

Transitional Bilingual Programs are another option for increasingly including second or foreign language learners in regular courses. In this model learners receive instruction in a combination of the L1 and the L2. These programs teach matter content in the learners' L1 and ESL content. The main disadvantage stated by Brown is that learners may not succeed since their linguistic skills are not sufficiently built. Hence, there is no real inclusion of these students. The last two models discussed by Brown are maintenance bilingual programs and

enrichment programs, which differ from the preceding ones in that learners are not taking these courses for survival purposes, but simply for enriching their knowledge of the L2 (p. 127).

Conclusion

It is important that educational environments consider more inclusive practices and take the time necessary to plan effectively. Attention to special education students and staff are necessary. Planning should involve all stakeholders in researching, discussing and examining the entire educational program. Inclusion involves restructuring of a whole program in a school. It requires constant assessment of practices and results. More comprehensive research must be done as inclusion becomes more widespread.

Constant reflection is necessary for us to be able to make clear determinations about which specific strategies will help children to become lifelong learners, contributing citizens in a society. Regarding EFL contexts there are several considerations about inclusion. For instance, in Colombia, teachers lack knowledge and preparation to face inclusion in general. Few institutions have special physical arrangements to cope with the needs of students and in the stages of course planning teachers may be unaware of the importance of considering aspects like schedules, classroom location, materials and assessment.

On the other hand, there is little or no research concerning the way to include learners with special needs into mainstream education, even though the context differ from the original research, Colombia suffers other significant problems that may cause students to be excluded or put in an unfavorable situation. Problems related to violence, migration, poverty and exclusion even due to geographical reasons.

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