

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: ESSENCE, PREREQUISITES FOR ITS EMERGENCE, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Georgi Kostov

Agricultural University – Plovdiv

Abstract. Educational systems around the world are challenged to provide effective education for all the children. This has led to increased interest in the idea of inclusive education. More broadly, it is seen as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners. Behind the idea of inclusion lies something inherent in every person – respect for the personality of the other and sharing a common world. Inclusion, besides being a leading value in the modern democratic society, is also a fundamental term for the social model. In the concept of inclusive education, it is of key importance to note that inclusion in education also means inclusion in society. The present article examines the essence of the inclusive education, its principles and components. It analyzes and systemizes the prerequisites for its emergence, summarizes the concept of inclusion, while at the same time the article highlights some challenges and opportunities in the field of inclusive education.

Keywords: educational systems; inclusive education; inclusion; essence

Introduction

Progressive humanistic thought has long linked its hopes for the renewal of society through scientific and political enlightenment, which would guarantee the freedom, life and dignity of people. The idea of inclusion is born within the framework of large-scale changes in the understanding of the value, rights and dignity of each person, of the policies, mechanisms and social changes that determine his status and life prosperity. This idea is an opportunity for a new understanding of the challenges of a social, moral and economic nature, aimed at ensuring equality of people in terms of gender, racial, national, ethnic, religious affiliation and disabilities of different nature (Ivanova 2015, p. 5).

In this context, the current understanding of the importance of human dignity is built on a series of social theories and documents that place the person at the center of policies to guarantee his freedom and human rights (Ivanova 2015, p. 5). The idea of human rights elevates the people, their overall development as free and responsible citizens of the world, the protection of their lives as the most important

value and goal in modern society. The new doctrine of the person also requires a change in the educational system, a serious challenge for which is overcoming inequality and achieving social justice, through which millions of people can be provided with opportunities to expand their choices for realization, to make sense of their own lives, to preserve their dignity, so that they can fully participate in the social, economic and cultural life in their communities.

The education of children with special needs in general education is based on their specifics, type of disability, level and number of children in the classroom. First of all, it should be noted that the students are of the same age, but they are not alike. The characteristics of individual children, their perceptions, their intellect, and their perceptions are different for all children. Therefore, the issue of creating an educational process for inclusive classes with special needs children needs to be solved (Feruza et al. 2020, p. 54). Teachers in an inclusive classroom can build school and family partnerships with a child-centered ability to plan lessons accordingly, learn how child disability affects education, and use methodological approaches to address these major challenges. Success in the learning process can only be achieved if the children with a disability are confident in their own qualities, skills and their bright future.

1. Inclusive education and inclusion as a process. Prerequisites for emergence

Today, social inclusion is a crucial issue in educational policy, as the education system reflects the state of society and serves as a crucial tool for its transformation. It is linked to fundamental democratic principles (Fig. 1), which makes inclusion itself a key and continuous process regarding the personal development and social activity of students.



Figure 1. Connection of the inclusion with fundamental democratic principles

Globally, the drive to educate all students in inclusive education systems is one of the most significant educational reforms (Gülsün et al. 2023, p. 1; Savolainen et al. 2022). According to Göransson and Nilholm (2014) the definition of the term „inclusion” ranges from accommodating a student with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream classrooms to creating communities that are welcoming to all learners, regardless of their background and learning abilities (Gülsün et al. 2023, p. 1). The beginning of this spectrum is often described as the narrow definition of inclusion, while the other end is aligned with the broad definition of inclusion that emphasizes inclusion as a systematic approach to eliminating obstacles from the participation of all learners (Booth & Ainscow 2002; Gülsün et al. 2023, p. 1).

Inclusion as a form of joint social life is a humanistic idea that has its own history and development in the direction of changing not only the educational system, but

also the place of man in society. Therefore, the direction of political and public attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education should be considered in the broad context of normative documents affirming the rights of all children to learn in a common educational environment (Ivanova 2015, p. 7).

The idea of inclusion was implicitly born back in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: „Everyone has the right to education”. This right remains unrealized for many people for various reasons and leads to their social isolation. To the greatest extent, this injustice affects children in disadvantaged situations, who remain tacitly excluded from education and do not acquire even minimal skills to integrate into a rapidly changing world (Ivanova 2015, p. 7).

In 1995 Clark, Dyson and Milward defined inclusion as „extending the scope of ordinary schools so they can include a greater diversity of children” (Florian 2014, p. 287). The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right to education for all children and pays special attention to one of its principles that „all rights are indivisible and interrelated”. This principle gives rise to the question of the education of certain groups of children who are educated in conditions other than mainstream education. This principle gives rise to the question of the education of certain groups of children who are educated in other conditions, quite different from mainstream education. The segregation of these children satisfies their right to education to some extent, but it conflicts with their other rights and creates conditions for discrimination and ignoring their interests, limiting their right to a normal life in the family and in the community. The segregation of these children satisfies their right to education to a certain extent, but it conflicts with their other rights and creates conditions for ignoring and discriminating against their interests, limiting their right to a normal life not only in the family but also in the community.

When it comes to inclusive education, things are not so different. The goals of inclusive education (Fig. 2) inevitably accompany its multifaceted history. The origins of inclusive education are rooted in special education research that questioned the efficacy of separate special education classes in the 1960s (Florian 2014, p. 286; Osgood 2005). Since then, many definitions of inclusive education have been advanced and many efforts to effect fundamental change to the structures and practices of special education have been undertaken. In the United Kingdom, Mel Ainscow (1991) linked inclusive education to ideas of school improvement arguing for the focus of special education to shift away from differences between learners towards changing school practices.

Graham and Slee (2006) noted that „talk of ‘including’ can only be made by those occupying a position of privilege at the centre” (Florian 2014, p. 287; Rouse & Florian 1997). In so doing, they made it clear that by relying on what it sets out to dismantle, renaming special education practices as inclusive education inevitably colludes with rather than challenges the status quo. According to Michailakis

& Reich (2009) the inclusive education is the attempt to educate persons with intellectual disabilities by integrating them as closely as possible into the normal structures of the educational system.

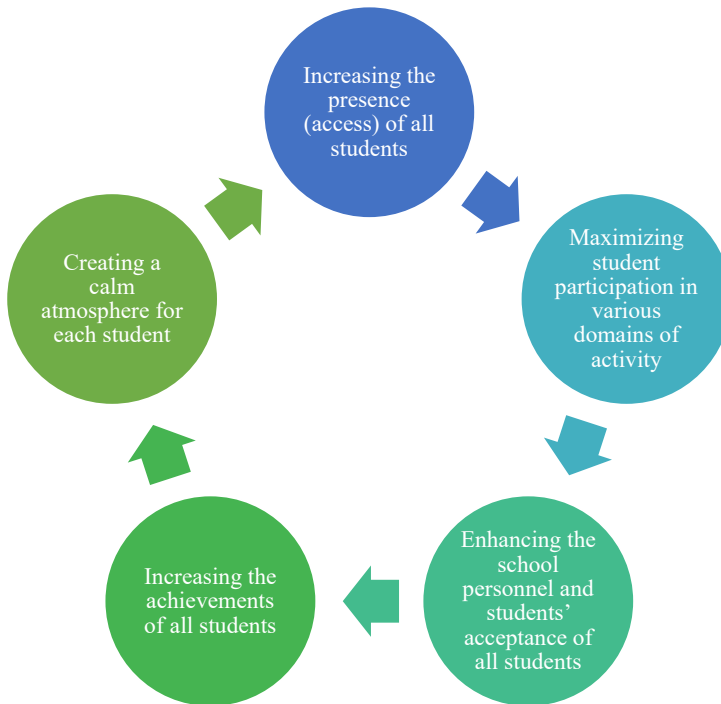


Figure 2. Goals of the inclusive education

Yet, inclusive education is rooted in conceptions of inclusion, the movement of students in special education (particularly those with severe disabilities) from separate and isolated facilities and classrooms into neighborhood schools and general education classrooms. Indeed, systematic searches of the literature consistently suggest research on inclusive education focuses on the inclusion of certain vulnerable groups, particularly students with special education needs and disabilities (Artiles et al. 2006, p. 67).

2. Inclusive education – principles and components

Inclusive education rejects the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Instead, it emphasizes personalized instruction, accommodations, and support systems tailored to meet the diverse needs of every learner. This may involve

modifications to curriculum, teaching strategies, and assessment methods to ensure that all students can actively participate and succeed.¹ The inclusive education's components (Fig. 3) and are the basis of these modifications.

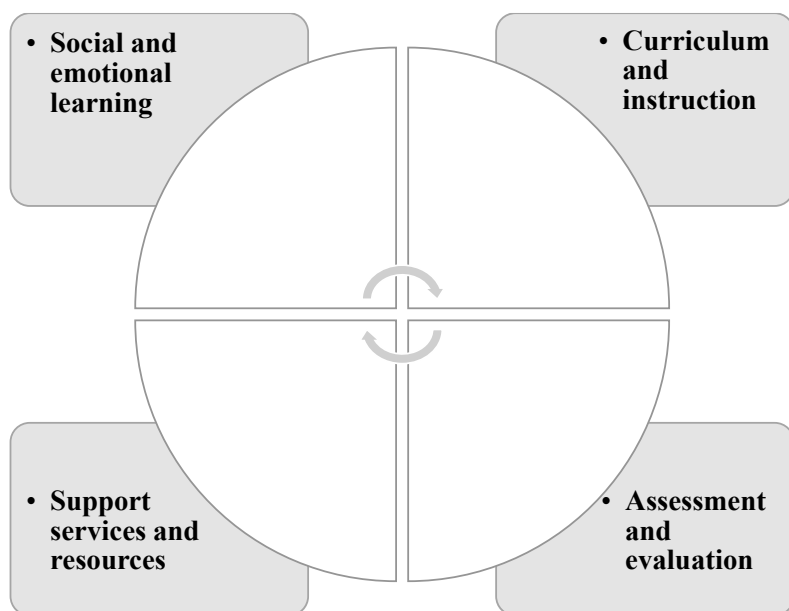


Figure 3. Components of the inclusive education

Undoubtedly, the unified whole of inclusive education and its components requires solid principles (Fig. 4) that serve to help overcome any inequalities.

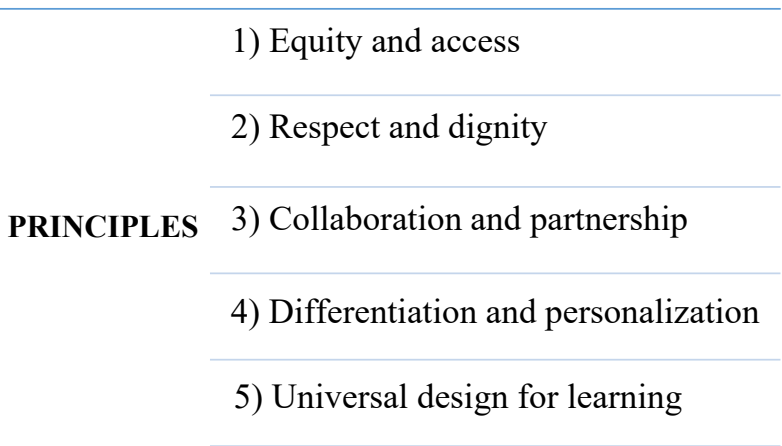


Figure 4. Principles of the inclusive education

3. Inclusive education – challenges and opportunities

While inclusive education holds great promise for promoting diversity, equity, and excellence in education, it also presents challenges (Fig. 5) that require careful consideration and proactive solutions.¹

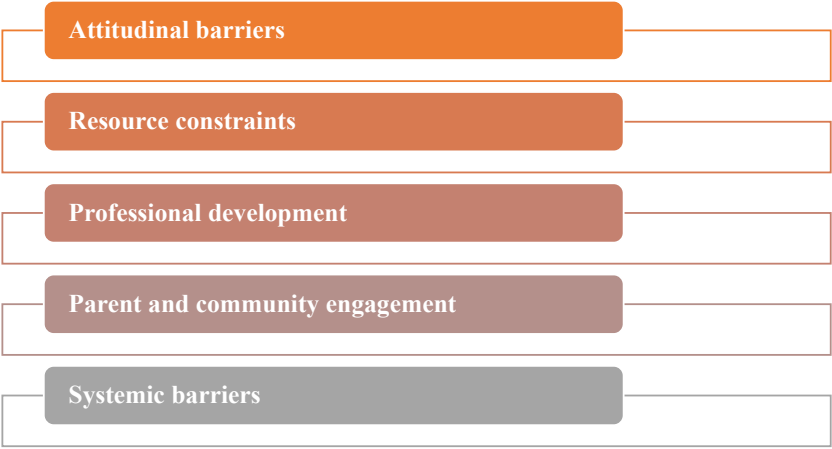


Figure 5. Challenges of the inclusive education

The **attitudinal barriers** are interpersonal challenges. Overcoming discrimination, attitudes of prejudice, and bias is essential for fostering an inclusive culture within communities and schools. Limited resources (**resource constraints**) including funding, personnel, and infrastructure, may pose challenges to implementing inclusive practices effectively.

The issue of **professional development** has long been at the forefront of pedagogical science and practice. Educators require ongoing support and training to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for implementing inclusive education successfully. Building partnerships with parents and community stakeholders (**parent and community engagement**) is essential for promoting inclusive education and addressing the diverse needs of students. **Systemic (structural) barriers** within educational systems, such as rigid policies, standardized testing, and tracking practices, may hinder efforts to create inclusive learning environments.

Over the years, the inclusive education to all children can offer the following opportunities (Fig. 6).²

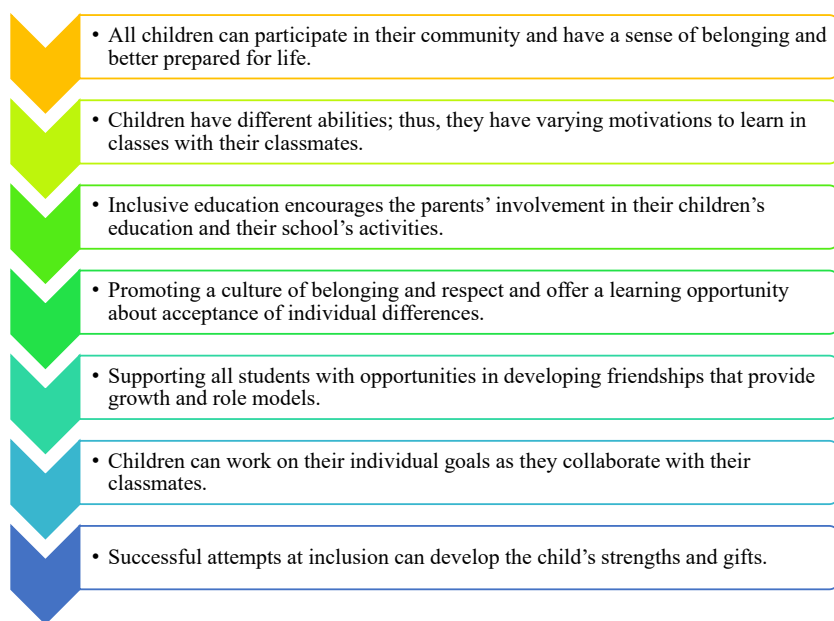


Figure 6. Opportunities of the inclusive education

Conclusion

Inclusive education is not just an educational approach; it is a moral imperative and a fundamental human right. By embracing diversity, fostering equity, and empowering every individual, we can create inclusive learning environments where all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment to social justice, we can build a more inclusive society where differences are celebrated, and every individual is valued and respected.¹

Inclusive education is a philosophy with a set of related attitudes and approaches to the education of all children. It is based on the belief that students of all abilities have the right to an education that is meaningful, appropriate and equal to that of their peers. Experts and researchers believe that in an inclusive classroom, every student can be valued, respected and supported, and inclusion requires the concerted effort of the whole school (Damyanov 2019, p. 7). Inclusive education is increasingly accepted as the most effective means of ensuring an equitable and high-quality education for every child, while reducing biased attitudes towards all students (Avramidis & Norwich 2002; Boyle 2007; Boyle & Anderson 2020; Boyle et al. 2023, p. 1).

Inclusive education is an efficient way of giving all children a chance to be in a regular classroom to learn and develop their skills. It is a means to generate learning opportunities for students who have been excluded traditionally from the traditional educational system. Moreover, inclusive education values the unique contributions of pupils from all backgrounds to allow several groups to grow together. Progress is slow because inclusive education requires changes to the school system and at all levels of society.²

NOTES.

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Georgi Kostov

ORCID iD: 0009-0004-1269-6604

WoS Researcher ID: KIE-6155-2024

Agricultural University

4000 Plovdiv, Bulgaria

E-mail: georgikostov@au-plovdiv.bg