

Editorial

Ability, disability and inclusive schooling

Fortunately, ever more teachers are committed to inclusion and the teams that enable this, thereby taking on the complexity of something that is far more than just a new buzzword. It is therefore worth asking ourselves about the meaning of inclusive education – an essential teaching tool – and what it brings to those of us who have been campaigning to place disabled children in mainstream schools for several decades now.

I would like to quote someone from outside the teaching world to capture the essence of inclusion [1]: «Our society is a marvelous mix of people which, as we all move forward together, can only bring us benefits and enrich us to make us more humane and, in short, happier». Certainly, inclusion is first and foremost an ethical, ideological choice. But it is also a choice that leads us to understand that a school of true quality is a school that can welcome diversity, ever present among pupils, and encourage interaction and positive interdependencies in the framework of such diversity.

Schools of this nature are organized around this pupil diversity that they must manage, a particular challenge in education systems where the usual reasoning is the opposite: «This is what the school (or the institution) is like; these pupils fit in and these do not» (for an array of reasons, including cultural, social or disability-related). This is one of the main benefits of inclusion: it focuses attention on the structural

changes the school must undergo in order to meet all pupils' needs, rather than concentrating on measures to offset shortfalls or simply be adaptable. The challenge, then, is no triviality. And nor is the merit of the teachers and social sectors that have made a pledge to this cause.

A firm belief that the school must meet the needs of every child in its catchment area (town, neighborhood, etc.) regardless of their personal conditions (including any kind of special need) and social situation allows us to rethink concepts such as ability and disability which are all too often viewed as merely individual features. Further consideration of this matter reveals that none of us is in fact required to master the full spectrum of capacities needed to survive. I myself would be incapable of making a computer like the one I am using to write these words, or of producing the electricity I need in my day-to-day life. Like anyone else, I have a «positive interdependence» with the people who do know how to do this. In our species, ability – thanks to culture – is far more social than individual. If we apply this to the school we can see the importance of everyone socializing with everyone, the importance of understanding that the marvelous mix of boys and girls moving forward is a vital educational tool which enables us all to contribute and to receive, building a shared ability. The core issue here, ultimately, is that this notion must become more and more rooted in our schools.

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1. Maria Gaspart (2005) La integración laboral. Una experiencia muy positiva. *Revista Médica Internacional sobre el Síndrome de Down*. Vol. 9, nº. 3, p. 33.