

**Original research article**

## HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN INCLUSION PROCESS

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### SUMMARY

This paper tries to make a short presentation of the development of the inclusion process, of the principles and recommendations from various international organizations and authorities regarding the optimal and effective inclusion of special needs children.

It also tries to highlight the role and importance of the government in supporting the proper legislation for the inclusion process.

**Keywords:** Europe, education, inclusion, history

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## INTRODUCTION

This presentation should start by establishing certain historical and chronological points of reference regarding the inclusive education. Thus, the motto "**Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs**" represents the point of reference that forms the base for this process. The terms on which the inclusion process is based must be defined:

**Education** - "*is the process of learning, based on the extraordinary plasticity of the human higher nervous activity, on the conditioning processes for adapting the experience (information) storing processes, on the organization of behaviours useful for the adaptation through sorting, transfer and generalization, imitation (spontaneous and voluntary), on the contamination, but especially the rationalization of the social, moral, ideological values, and on the relationship that the individual has with them*"<sup>1</sup>

**Integration** - "school is not just an instruction and education environment, but is also a form of social integration"<sup>2</sup>.

**Inclusion** - "...action toward the extension of the purpose and role of regular school, transforming it in order to meet a larger diversity of children"<sup>3</sup>,

**Inclusive education** - "is a continuing process of improving schooling, aiming to use the existing resources, especially the human resources, to support the participation in the education process of all the children in a community,"<sup>4</sup>

**Integrated education** - "tries to develop in those children certain physical and psychological abilities that would bring them closer to normal children"<sup>5</sup>,

**Special education** - "refers to the adaptation of the education process, as well as to the specific intervention (rehabilitation/ recovery) for those who are not achieving, or are not likely to achieve through ordinary educational

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<sup>1</sup> Şchiopu, Dicţionarul de psihologie/The Dictionary of Psychology 1997

<sup>2</sup> Păun, E., 1999, as cited in Vrăjmaş, T., 2001

<sup>3</sup> according to Vrăjmaş, T., 2001

<sup>4</sup> according to UNICEF, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Verza, E., 1988, as cited in Vrăjmaş, T., 2001

provisions, the level of educational, social and other attainments appropriate to their age"<sup>6</sup>,

Analysing from a historical perspective the society's attitude toward special needs children until the seventies, Deschamps et al., 1981, as cited in Vračjmaš, T., 2001, described it as follows:

- extermination;
  - segregation;
  - granting a reduced citizenship;
  - granting equal rights.
1. The first preoccupations in regards to the **education** of special needs children appeared during the Renaissance age (the concept of "*tabula rasa*").
  2. The pioneer of the actual experiments of **specialized education** is considered to be Itard, the one who tried to humanize the feral child discovered in Aveyron, France (1799). The teaching - learning techniques elaborated by Itard were developed more by Seguin, whose activity has substantially influenced the progress of the treatment of special needs persons.
  3. After the nineteen-seventies, the activity of the special needs organizations and associations has intensified, aiming to **earn the granting of equal rights** (the resolutions of the 1971 UN General Assembly - the "Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons," and of 1975 - the "Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons," serve as proof).
  4. The following period corresponds to the **elaboration and promotion of the normalization principle**, initiated by the Dane Mikkelson, the Swedes Nirje and Grunewald, and the American Wolfensberger.
  5. In the nineteen-nineties, a new intervention strategy arose, the inclusive education, which was considered as a part of the paradigm, "**Education for All in the year 2000**" that was initiated during the World Conference "Education For All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs," where Ministries of Education from around the world met in Jomtiem, Thailand, in 1990.

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, 1983, as cited in Vračjmaš, T., 2001.

The problem of *exclusion from education* was a theme included in the political agenda of many countries. Thus, the focus was on the following categories:

- Children who are already within the education system, but for some reason, do not have satisfying results;
- Children who do not go to school, but they could do it, if the school would be more flexible regarding their needs;
- A relatively small number of children with more serious disabilities, who need also some form of supplementary support.

The orientation toward *inclusive education* represents one of the main ideas of the Salamanca Declaration, in regards to the special education needs principles, policies, and practices, elaborated by 92 governments and 27 international organizations.

International documents regarding the integrated/inclusive education as recognition of the human and child's rights highlight the following aspects:

**The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (the 1982 UN General Assembly Resolution)**, having as motto "*The education of disabled persons must be done within the regular school system,*" asserts that the basic requirements for schooling must be based on:

- individualization of teaching;
- local accessibility;
- comprehensiveness (the education must be accessible to all, no matter the age and disability);
- offering a large palette of actions (education programs).

The principles chosen by the UN Committee to found the children's rights were:

- nondiscrimination;
- the child's best interests;
- ensuring the children's survival and development;
- expression of the children's opinion (by participating in the decision-making that concerns their own lives).

**The European Community (Union)**, 1990, focuses on the:

- facilitation of integration in the regular schools of children and young people with disabilities;
- involvement of families and social and community institutions;
- distribution of necessary resources;

- existence of adequate assessment services;
- adaptation of the existing education regulations, aiming to eliminate the structural obstacles in front of integration.

**The World Conference, "Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs," where Ministries of Education from around the world met in Jomtiem, Thailand, in 1990, makes the following recommendations:**

- the inherent right of a child to a complete cycle of primary education;
- child-centered activities, in which the individual differences are considered a challenge, not an obstacle;
- training the teachers for this;
- recognizing the individual educational needs;
- inter-sectoral, integrated, and holistic approach on education.

Also, at the **1992 Council of Europe**, its members assert the following directions:

- all children with disabilities, no matter their nature, have the right to an adequate education, in a good environment that would suit their or their families' needs and wishes;
- satisfying certain demands/conditions (support, counseling, rehabilitation services, adapted equipment and techniques) necessary for equalizing the chances;
- the special schools must meet, among other conditions, the ones for organizing them as resource centers for regular schools, being linked to them, aiming to increase cooperation.

**The 1993 UN General Assembly** - the education authorities are responsible for the education of the persons with disabilities within integrated contexts;

**The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)** - says that regular schools with 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 ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system"* (according to a document edited and published by UNICEF, 1999).

**Recommendations:**

- each child has the fundamental right to education and must be given the chance to reach and maintain an acceptable level of education;
- each child has unique learning particularities, interests, abilities, and needs;
- the education systems and learning programs must be designed and applied in such a manner as to take into consideration the individual particularities and demands;
- the children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools;

The main principle that is retained is that "the differences between people are normal, the education must adapt to these differences and to the specific demands that derive from them, rather than forcing the child to adapt to certain prefabricated assertions regarding the purpose and nature of education."

At the **World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995)**, the Declaration stipulates that the governments should "Ensure equal educational opportunities at all levels for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings, taking full account of individual differences and situations."

**The International Commission on Education for the twenty-first Century, in 1996**, has concluded that "the educational policies must be diverse enough so that they would not become another cause for social exclusion."

The **1997 Geneva UNICEF Committee** has also released the following conclusions and recommendations:

- **the negative attitudes in society often lead to abuse and neglect** - promotion of studies, information, and influence regarding the situation of children with disabilities;
- **the knowledge regarding support for children with disabilities is fragmented between different groups of professionals** - inter-sectoral and inter-professional collaboration, involving families;
- **policies based on charitable interventions and less on rights** - highlighting and promoting the knowledge and abilities related to the stimulation of and working together with children with disabilities; treating the child and avoiding the focus on the disability;
- **the focus continues to be on the children, on their adaptation to the system (integrated education), not on changing the system (inclusive education)** - the ongoing promotion and development of inclusive education, based on the idea of

responding to diversity in schools, and of the need to comprise all children in the educational act - will lead to an improvement of the curriculum and of the child-centered methodology;

**The World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000)** - the Framework for Action adopted was that of creating "safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all."

"The inclusion of children with special needs, from disadvantaged ethnic minorities and migrant populations, from remote and isolated communities and from urban slums, and others excluded from education, must be an integral part of strategies to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015."

The normalization and integration principle has made possible for the appearance, at the beginning of the nineties, of the **inclusion principle**.

The inclusion indicators comprise 3 dimensions of school life:

1. **The cultural dimension** - the creation of a culture of school must become a process as important as the one of teaching knowledge and developing skills.
2. **The strategic dimension** - placing the inclusive approach right in the heart of school development.
3. **The practical dimension** - ensuring a reflection in the classroom activity of the school's culture and inclusive policies.

Inclusion refers to the fact that anyone, no matter their disabilities or difficulties they encounter in learning, must be treated as members of society, and the various special services they need must be provided within the social, educational, medical, and other services offered to all members of society.

The factors of inclusion of an effective education, according to Popovici, D.V., 2007, are:

- ***preparing the special needs pupils*** for their inclusion, through the participation to a series of group activities together with the normal children (in kindergartens, sports clubs, community activities);
- ***the comprehensive and multidisciplinary assessment of the special needs pupils*** before sending them to the inclusive school;
- ***counseling the special needs pupils*** in regards to the advantages and limitations of educational inclusion;

- ***specifying the exact role and place of the educational inclusion project for the special needs pupil*** within the general pedagogical project of the inclusive school;
- ***knowing the inclusive school principal's position in regards to the educational inclusion process;***
- ***informing the teachers*** regarding the main methodical and theoretical aspects of educational inclusion for each case in particular;
- ***the way in which the teachers are involved in the educational inclusion process*** (their ability to individualize programs and to elaborate effective personalized educational programs);
- ***cooperation with the interdisciplinary teams*** ensuring services of inclusive education for the evaluation of special needs pupils, and of psycho-pedagogical assistance in elaborating intervention and rehabilitation programs;
- ***involving the family in the activities of assessing and creating personalized educational programs for their own child (OT);***
- ***informing and preparing the classroom pupils to properly support and interact with the special needs pupil*** that is to be included in that class;
- ***counseling the normal pupils' parents*** aiming to prevent reactions of rejection toward the inclusion process;

**Organization models of integrated education for pupils with disabilities-** represents various degrees of integration, from partial to total integration. The most used models, worldwide, are the following:

- The model of cooperation between the special school and the inclusive school**
- The model based on organizing a special classroom for the special needs pupils in the inclusive school;**
- The model based on using separate instruction rooms and resources in the inclusive school;**
- The model based on an itinerant teacher, specialized in special needs children's activities, who works at the regular school;**
- The common model, based on an itinerant teacher, specialized in special needs children's activities, who teaches all the special needs children in a geographical area**

**The specialized educational program** - This program must start from the general domains and principles regarding child development. This development is



produced from a motor, sensory-motor, cognitive, psycho-emotional, volitional-regulatory, communication, and social standpoint, in the personal autonomy sector.

The fundamental principles that need respecting when conducting a personalized educational program are as follows:

- the development must be sequential;
- the system changes must take into account the inter-conditioning between the domains;
- individual stages of development;
- the development must be from simple to complex;
- the development depends on the innate characteristics and lived experiences;
- the development is produced in stages;
- the development is a symmetrical and inseparable combination between maturing and learning.

According to international experts specialized on personalized intervention, this is accomplished through:

- Personalized service plan
- Personalized intervention plan (on various fields)

The implementation of inclusive education in Europe is in various stages of development. Certain measures have had more success in certain countries, thus constituting examples of good practices that can be analysed and implemented, adapting them to the needs of each country, such good examples being Norway and Denmark. Thus, the transformation of special schools in resource centres, the implementation of Individualized Educational Plans, forming a positive attitude in the parents, and promoting the learning through cooperation, are just a few successful examples.

The transformation of special schools in resource centres is taking place in many European countries, trying to reach the following goals:

- To offer courses of ongoing professional training for teachers and other specialists;
- To elaborate and disseminate modern materials and working methods;
- To offer support to inclusive schools and to parents of special needs children;
- To offer short-term individualized support to pupils;

- To support the young people with disabilities in finding work.

In the countries in which the special education system is well developed, the special schools are actively involved in the inclusion process, the collaboration between regular and special schools being a key element in ensuring the success of inclusion.

Once the form of support is identified, most countries elaborate Individualized Educational Plans. These have started from the assessment of the children's needs and the identification of their abilities, in order to provide them with the best forms of support. Out of the pedagogical practices that have an increased effectiveness in the inclusion of children, one can mention peer tutoring, heterogeneous group learning, and cooperation learning.

In Denmark, the integration of special needs children represents one of the basic principles of education, the organization being as follows:

- integration is done in various social categories, in public or social schools;
- in private schools, created by parents associations with certain religious or political views.

Certain categories of special needs children with serious disorders and who cannot integrate in public schools or classrooms are in special rehabilitation and education programs, in special schools or centres, and their social integration is done through activities that are best suited to their social relational and participation potential.

Italy stands out as being one of the countries with the best strategy in regards to the way in which it approaches inclusion. The local community plays an important role in supporting all programs of this sort.

The United Kingdom remains one of the most conservative countries in regards to inclusive school, believing that all special needs children must go to special needs schools.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the specific aspects of each country, there are some common tendencies reflecting the progress in these countries in regards to the implementation of inclusive education.

- In the countries that have two distinct education systems, inclusive and special, one can observe a tendency to develop and offer supplementary education services;

- There is progress in regards to the laws supporting inclusive education;
- The parents' involvement in regards to selecting the best education services for their child;
- The transformation of special schools in resource centers is a continuous process in most countries;
- Most countries try to go from a medical model of disability to a paradigm that would have education in its center;
- The continuous training of the teachers in order to be ready to face the new changes regarding the special needs children's education process;

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## ИСТОРИЈСКИ ПРЕГЛЕД РАЗВОЈА ИНКЛУЗИЈЕ У ЕВРОПИ

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### САЖЕТАК

Овај рад покушава да укратко опише развој процеса инклузије, принципа и препорука разних међународних организација и одговарајућих нивоа власти у вези оптималног и ефикасног укључивања деце са посебним потребама.

Рад такође покушава да укаже на улогу и значај владе у подршци спровођења одговарајуће законске регулативе у области инклузије.

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## ИСТОРИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО ПРОЦЕССА ИНКЛЮЗИИ

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### РЕЗЮМЕ

Эта статья пытается сделать короткую презентацию о развитии процесса инклюзии, принципов и рекомендаций различных международных организаций и органов власти связанную с оптимальным и эффективным включением детей с особыми потребностями.

Она также пытается подчеркнуть роль и значение государства в поддержке надлежащего законодательства для процесса инклюзии.

**Ключевые слова:** Европа, образование, инклюзия, история

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