

Inclusive Education-Advantages and Disadvantages

Petrovska S.¹, Sivevska D.², Runceva J.³

¹ Associate professor, PhD, (MACEDONIA)

² Assistant professor, PhD (MACEDONIA)

³ Junior Teaching Assistant, M.Sc (MACEDONIA)

sonja.petrovska@ugd.edu.mk, despina.sivevska@ugd.edu.mk, jadranka.ruceva@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract

Parallel with the development of all of the segments of society, comes the development of the thought and the understanding of people about the existence of differences between them, as well as respect and acceptance of the same. The conclusions of numerous conventions for Human Rights indicate that all of the people have equal right for education and that all of the countries in their educational institutions should ensure equal involvement of children, regardless of their abilities and skills, in all forms of education.

Hence, in numerous studies, the term inclusion and the process of inclusion of children with special education needs into regular classes have become more prevalent. The implementation of this process enables advantages for all of the direct/indirect stakeholders (pupils, parents, peers), but at the same time it brings a numerous difficulties in its implementation. This is precisely the purpose of the paper, wherein we will briefly try to show the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of the inclusive teaching substantiated by numerous relevant researches in this topic.

Keywords: Inclusion; Advantages; Disadvantages.

Introduction

According to the UNESCO definition, inclusive education refers to the ability of the school to provide quality education for all children, regardless of their differences. Inclusion is defined as a process of identifying and responding to the different needs of the children through their increased participation in teaching, learning, cultural life and community life, as well as by reducing their exclusion in/from education. This process includes changes and alignment of the contents, approach, structure and strategies in education, meaning that all children of school age should attend school and that the school has responsibility to educate all children. The school should be open for all of the pupils, with special attention to children with disabilities and the children from marginalized groups. All of the children should be part of the school community regardless of their strength and/or weakness in certain areas. Every child's rights must be respected, and the state has a responsibility to provide equal conditions for education of all of the children.

The meaning of the term inclusion have changed over the years and until today there isn't still a generally accepted definition for inclusion. Often the term integration is encountered as a synonym of inclusion, although it is indicated that these two terms have different meanings. Since the nineties, of the last century, the inclusion has emerged as a notion above the integration.

The inclusion (lat. inclusio) means involvement, encompassing, understanding; in the professional literature can be explained as: to be involved, to belong, to participate, and to be with the others. Inclusion encourages and helps each person with special needs to take full responsibility for their behaviour and learning with the help of the parent-guardian, teacher, which significantly affects the mutual communication and cooperation on the principle of "all for one, one for" [4].

The inclusion means greater involvement of all of the pupils in the process of teaching. Inclusive education is based on curriculum changes and on the process of education on the teachers and pupils. This should encourage the establishment of better, improved, society-school relation which would contribute to a reduction of segregation, i.e. separation. Today inclusive education becomes a key part of two major initiatives for education fostering and for equal opportunities in education: UNESCO, under the title "Education for All" (Education for All- EFA) and the program „Millennium Development Goals “of the United Nations.

Diversity has been encountered, when the notion inclusion has been defined. Odom and associates (Odom et al., 2011) have defined inclusion as a program or group in which the children with disorder and the

children with normal (typical) development participate together [10]. For Begeny and Martens (2007) inclusion is a practice for including all of the learners, regardless of their ability or background - in classes that suit to their age and schools that respond to the needs of the pupils [2]. Farrell (2000) considers that in order for the inclusion to be complete, all of the children should be included into the active part of the school life, they should be valued as members of the school community, and to be observed as her integral members [7]. According to his understanding, inclusion is a state of mind. The inclusion is always reciprocal, and in the inclusive surroundings everyone gives a contribution for the sake of all. If the community member receives (or takes) only, and does not give, he is not included – he is a guest or a thief [9].

Inclusion also means a flexibility in terms of satisfaction of specific educational and social needs of all school children. The process of inclusion contains a different valuable system and a different philosophy of education is based on this process. This also means significant changes in terms of the work program, teacher education, method of work and the manner of assessment of achieved results. Hence, the main goal of inclusion in education is to foster development and learning of all children under the same conditions and circumstances [9].

The goal of the inclusion is to change the school, not the characteristics of children. Inclusive education means that schools should be prepared to meet the needs of different pupils. All pupils should be provided with appropriate educational programs adapted to the individual capacities and needs of the children. Children with special needs should be an integral part of the class, respected and accepted. These pupils should be provided with support and assistance in the establishment of the social integration with peers and other people. One of the goals of the inclusion is to cherish the social development, aimed at evaluation of the social roles of the children with different special needs. Hence, the philosophy of inclusion is not concerned only with education, but with their successful participation in society as a whole [3].

Inclusion by itself does not imply equalization of all people, but respect for the differences of each individual. The inclusion of each individual gives him an opportunity to decide for his own life and to take his own responsibility in accordance with his capabilities.

In the inclusive educational system the holistic approach has been emphasized, an approach that takes everything into account, not just the educational needs of pupils, and at the same time no one in particular hasn't been separated. This system creates appropriate conditions for all pupils, respecting their individual differences and needs. Inclusion seeks for a change of the entire school system, so that curricula are very flexible [6].

In this system a common curriculum for all pupils has been implemented, with a maximum individualized adjustment of the content, methods, procedures and the pace of work of each pupil. This system involves creativity and diversity in terms of didactic material, access and learning through collaboration. This enables inventive and effective learning of the individual and reducing of the possibility of labelling and discrimination.

Advantages of Inclusive Teaching

The process of inclusion in the educational system requires changes to the traditional education, in all segments, starting from educators/teachers, the level of their information and knowledge of the needs of the children with special needs, as well as ways and approaches that should be applied for easier inclusion of children with special educational needs in regular educational system, the behavior of other pupils with these pupils, as well as material and technical, architectural barriers for successful implementation of this teaching.

The benefits of the inclusion in the educational process in terms of the current traditional way of organization of the teaching have been observed many years ago, and they are also discussed nowadays. (The differences between the traditional and inclusive approach have been presented by Jonsson, 1995).

Table 1. Different educational practices (Jonsson T. Inclusive Education. UNDP, Geneva 1995.).

Traditional approach	Inclusive approach
Education for someone	Education for all
Static	Flexible
Collective lectures	Individual lectures
Learning in separated environment	Learning in integrated environment
Emphasis on lecturing	Emphasis on learning
Directed toward subjects	Directed toward children
Opportunities limited with exclusion	Equalization of the opportunities for all

Proponents of the inclusion in the teaching process highlight the social and ethical advantage of this kind of education. Implementation of inclusive education brings numerous benefits to participants (direct and indirect) in the educational process: children (pupils), parents, teachers and local community.

Pupils with a particular disorder, in this (inclusive) environment, will progress better in social and academic view. These students will be better prepared for the life in the community and at the same time will avoid the negative effects of exclusion. "Children who learn together, learn to live together". The regular classroom is a better stimulating environment for the pupil with special needs, unlike the environment in the traditional special classroom. Regular pupils in the inclusive classroom can be an example of appropriate behavior in the classroom for the children with special needs. It is further believed that the successful inclusion helps learners with typical development to develop positive attitudes towards children/persons with disabilities, and in future it would lead to adoption of social principles that will be based on equality and establishment of a harmonious society. Through the inclusion of children with special educational needs in regular classes, they have been taught how to control aggressive behavior, and they are offered with assistance in developing a broad world view and to move away from egocentrism, and due to the stay in the regular groups, their self-esteem and self-confidence is encouraged [5].

At the same time, the teachers who work in the inclusive environment will receive help to enrich their professional skills, (develop skills which allow them to include children with disabilities in the classroom, develop skills for team working with numerous regular and professional staff and numerous specialists), to develop creativity and innovation, to learn new teaching techniques that can help to all of the pupils. This way of organization of the teaching allows the teachers to acquire special emotional connection with the children with special educational needs, offers them an opportunity to develop awareness and respect to the individual differences among pupils.

Advantages for the parents whose children are involved in inclusive education are related to the ability to achieve broad contacts in diverse environment, to receive continuous assistance in the process of solving the problems that their children are facing with every day.

The local community has benefits from the inclusive education. Some of them are: the formation of positive attitude within its population, greater awareness of the needs of the people with special educational needs, various day-care centers for persons with special educational needs have been opened. Mutual assistance and joint activities that are performed at an early age create a society in which people cooperate and give a contribution (according to their abilities) to the community.

Disadvantages of Inclusive Teaching

Special schools and special classrooms within regular schools were places in which children with special educational needs were accommodate, upbringing and educated, and the regular school (with its overall structure) was adjusted and was in function of the regular pupils. The inclusive education opened the doors of the regular schools, regular teaching, and for the children with special needs, but what is important to emphasize is that the process of inclusion of children with special needs require changes in many segments (changes in the overall organization) of the regular schooling, because the inclusion of these children does not means only their placement in regular schools, but inclusion in regular classes should ensure and provide quality upbringing - educational process for them [11].

When we talk about changing the regular school, there should not be omitted inevitable changes in: the architecture of the schools and the removal of the architectural barriers for save moving of the pupils; providing appropriate material - technical means and equipment for the pupils hiring a larger number of experts, specialists in working with children with special needs; adequate and continuous training of teachers for work with children with special needs, because so far the very initial teacher education was aimed at upbringing and education for the regular pupils, but not for the children with special educational needs. Therefore these teachers need basic knowledge in this area, and then a continuous enhancement of that knowledge; raising the community awareness of human differences and respecting those differences, which in turn will help the accepting of the children with special needs in regular classes by the other children and their parents [9].

Those who are against inclusion, especially the model of the full inclusion, listed several arguments: a) regular education is not ready for inclusion; b) the empirical data is not sufficiently confirming the success of the inclusion; c) pupils with special needs require intensive treatment, which cannot be get in regular classes; d) To have a successful inclusion it is necessary to a large extent to be changed and adjust the environment in the regular teaching as well as attitudes towards children with special needs that must be accommodated in quite the opposite environment. According to these authors, these pupils benefit more if at least part of their school day will be spend out of the regular grade [3].

All these barriers (spatial, financial, human, ethical) that stand in the way of implementation of the inclusive education is necessary to be removed to be able to talk about inclusive education in the true sense of the word, otherwise inappropriately implemented inclusion can carry numerous harmful effects.

During the implementation of the inclusive education an attention must be given to the following (several) aspects, in order to avoid the weaknesses that this inclusive education can carry it with it, and in order to successfully include children with disabilities in regular classes. Some of the segments that need to pay

attention are: *The number of the children in the class* – the number of the children in the class in which there are not included children with special needs can't be the same with the number of the children in the class in which there are included children with special educational needs. *It should not be allowed to prevail the socialization over the educational part* in the process of education of the children with special needs. McCarty according to Irmsher says that educators and parents of children in general education worry that full inclusion will lower the standard of learning for the class and make it less of a priority than socializing [8]. To provide an environment in which pupils with special needs and regular pupils will feel safe and will not be afraid whether they will be injured, attacked or to be banter. *To develop the awareness among students about the differences in relation to the possibilities and abilities of people* in order to avoid discontent that may occur due to lack of the attention, interaction with the teacher or because of differences in the tasks they receive [1].

Conclusion

In order to be truly implement the inclusive philosophy in practice, a collective responsibility of all of the society members, not just individuals, is required. If there is no consciousness as a whole, it must be build. In that case there will be a full integration of all, not just of the individuals. In this way, the inclusion in education becomes a struggle for human rights, rather than just a play of integration. The fact that many of the countries that have well-developed school system have done full integration of all children in the regular classes and schools [9].

Inclusive education with the numerous advantages that it brings it for all of the stakeholders in the upbringing - educational process is needed indeed, but its implementation should be fully, to satisfy all criteria, in order to enjoy the benefits that derive from it, otherwise its improvised and partial implementation can have negative effects on most participants in it. It is necessary to raise the social awareness of the differences that exist between people and the need for inclusion of people with the disabilities in social life. Reorganization of schools in terms of: spatial, material, technical conditions, providing professional staff, continuous training of teachers to work with the pupils with special needs, is a prerequisite in order to talk about inclusive education in the true sense of the word.

REFERENCES

- [1] Berg, L. S. (2004). The advantages and disadvantages of the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms. Retrieved from <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/lib/thesis/2005/2005bergs.pdf>.
- [2] Begeny, J., Martens, B., (2007) Inclusionary education in Italy, *Remedial and special education*, Volume 28, Number 2, March/April 2007, Pages 80–9
- [3] Brojčin, B., Inkluzivno obrazovanje-opšti koncepti, Seminar Efektivno angažovanje za inkluzivno obrazovanje, USAID, Retrieved from: <http://www.inkluzija.org/biblioteka/MIDWAY-Inkluzivno%20obrazovanje%20opsti%20koncepti.pdf>
- [4] Borić, S., Tomić, R. (2012). Stavovi nastavnika osnovnih škola o inkluziji, *Metodicki obzori* 7(2012)3.
- [5] Društvo ujedinjenih građanskih akcija "DUGA", (2006), Vodič kroz inkluziju u obrazovanju, Sarajevo, 30-31.
- [6] Halilović, M., Uloga učitelja i nastavnih strategija u inkluzivnoj nastavi, Retrieved from: http://www.udruzenje-defektologa.ba/phocadownload/okrugli_sto/06%20Uloga%20ucitelja%20i%20strategija%20uce nja%20u%20inkluzivnoj%20nastavi.pdf
- [7] Farrell, P. (2000). The impact of research on developments in inclusive education, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4 (2), 153-162.
- [8] McCarty, K. (2006). Full inclusion: The Benefits and Disadvantages of Inclusive Schooling. An Overview. Azusa Pacific University. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496074.pdf>
- [9] Milenović, Z. (2013). Nastavnik u inkluzivnoj nastavi, Beograd: Zaduzbina Andrejevic
- [10] Odom, L. (2011), Inclusion for Young Children With Disabilities, *Journal of Early Intervention* December 2011 vol. 33
- [11] Vujačić, M. (2011). Rol' učitelja v oblasti inkluzivnogo obrazovanija. *Pedagogija* 66(3).