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Heterogeneity and Teacher Education – Underpinning Philosophy of Inclusive Education

Internationally, or at least in the policy statements of international bodies, there appears to be an ever strengthening commitment towards more inclusive societies and an ever strengthening recognition of the important role that education must play if such aspirations are ever to be realised. Definitions of what is meant by inclusion seem, however, to be developing over time. For example, many of the policy statements written in the 1980s and early 1990s seem to define inclusion as an issue concerned primarily with disability. The UN World Programme of Action (1983)[1] argues that

> 'Member states should adopt policies which recognize the rights of disabled persons to equal educational opportunities with others. The education of disabled persons should as far as possible take place in the general school system.'(art. 120).

Similarly, the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) demands that action must be taken

> '… to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the educational system." (art. 3.5).

Likewise the U.N. Standard Rules (1993) suggest that

> "States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system." (Rule 6).

However, the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) heralded the emergence of a broader policy definition of inclusion, one where inclusion is concerned with the rights of each and every individual to belong to a society, which

> 'shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's [...] disability [...] or other status." (art. 2.1).

This broader definition was extended in the UNESCO Salamanca-Statement and the Framework for Action (1994), which was signed by 92 governments, as well as 25 international associations. It

> '… call(s) upon all governments and urge(s) them to [...] adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education ..." (item 3, UNESCO 1994: p.10).

Item 2 argues for the importance of inclusive schools:

> '... regular schools within this 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 to the entire education system." (item 2, UNESCO 1994: p.10)

The final report argues that

> '… The task for the future is to identify ways in which the school as part of that social environment can create better learning opportunities for all children and by this means to

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[1] Reference for this and the following three quotations: Inclusion International 1996, p.5

address the challenge that the most pervasive source of learning difficulties is the school system itself." (UNESCO 1994: p.15).

More recent UN documents utterly emphasize that inclusion is about all learners and the education system they are in. UNESCO states that inclusive education is concerned with
> '….providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem." (UNESCO 2003: p7).

The 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) (2008) recommended that policy makers should acknowledge that:
> 'inclusive education is an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination'. (UNESCO, 2008)

In policy terms, the European Union is also strongly committed to the concept of inclusion, although what is actually meant by inclusion is more difficult to discern. For example, in policy statements the European Commission consistently makes reference to social integration and highlights both the need for and the importance of positive action across Europe (e.g.: Article 6a of the Amsterdam Treaty; Paragraph III.1 of the Social Action Programme 1998-2000, Com (98) 259; announcement of the Commission towards equality of chances for handicapped people Com (96) 40 endg.; announcement of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Komm (2003) 16 endg.).

In addition to a lack of clarity about how inclusion is defined, both wider international policies and European policy appear to express a clear desire for and commitment to more inclusive societies. However, to add to the complexity, the contextualisation of policy within individual member states is variable. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this. One factor is likely to be the very different political and historical contexts for inclusive education in different European countries. For example, memories of the impact of the exclusion of communities in Germany and Austria in the 1930s and 1940s or of the impact of communism on Hungary in the 1940s and 1950s have had a deep impact on thinking within these countries. Similarly, the ways in which international policies on inclusion relate to policies on education vary considerably from country to country, as do the current school contexts of different countries. However, it is clear that for a variety of reasons the experiences of individuals in relation to ideas of inclusion in countries across Europe are variable.

Ideas of Inclusion

Within the European policy context, the term inclusion is used as if there were shared understandings of what it means, yet the language of inclusion itself is complex. For example, in Norway, in Spain and in the UK there are quite clear distinctions between the term integration and the word inclusion. Indeed the lexical choice is seen as a statement of where in the inclusion debate an individual stands. However, in German speaking countries and in Hungary the term integration is for some people synonymous with ideas of inclusion, whereas for others inclusion is a development from integration. In Norway, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK the terms hold different connotations. Integration is most commonly associated with bringing into a system children and young people traditionally on the margins of society.

Integration in mainstream schools of students with disabilities or special educational needs has been on the agenda for a long time in many countries.

 "Planning for integration of children from special schools into ordinary schools often focused on the perceived abilities, disabilities and potential of students themselves and on the question: which students would benefit from integration? This has led to individual arrangements being made for students deemed suitable for integration, ranging from weekly visits to full-time basis, supported placement, special classes and units attached to ordinary schools. Frequently, 'integrated' students have been assigned the status of 'visitors'." (Armstrong 1998, p.53).

In all cultures the idea, however labelled, is open to multiple interpretations. Any attempt to define inclusion becomes riddled with complexity. In an attempt to explore the various prisms through which the concept of inclusion might be viewed, Dyson and Milward (2000) identify a wide range of perspectives. For example, inclusion, they argue, is a term sometimes used to describe an educational system. In an inclusive educational system every child and young person would be offered comparable educational experiences, although these experiences might be offered in different kinds of school. Inclusion might also be taken to refer to a locality where a community takes full responsibility for the education of all children who live within that community, although education may take place in different kinds of school; or it might refer to the classroom, one where all learners are educated together. Inclusion is also used in relation to the idea of the curriculum, where the education of all children and young people is based on the same syllabus. Inclusion can also be defined in terms of learning experiences, in which all learners work together or which are designed to pursue common broad learning outcomes intended to enable all children and young people to play a full part in society. Dyson *et al* (2002) describe clearly the fundamental difference between integration and inclusion. Inclusive education, they suggest, is concerned with the participation of children and young people in key aspects of their school. Inclusion is not so much concerned with provision for one or other group of students as with student diversity. The central issue for schools is not that they have to accommodate a small number of atypical students into their standard practices, but that they have to respond simultaneously to students who all differ from each other in important ways – some of whom pose particular challenges to the school. Inclusion is, however, not simply about maintaining the presence of students in schools but about maximizing their participation in school.

The idea of inclusion in education is concerned with all learners and is built on the guiding principle of the Salamanca Declaration, stating that

> '… schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups." (framework, art.3; UNESCO 1994: p.59)

Inclusion is not only an issue of disability, neither is it primarily an issue of place; it is about the qualities of the learning environment for all those who take part. UNESCO (2003) argues that inclusive education is a challenge to educational systems, enabling them to respond to the broad variations of learning needs of all students.

> '….providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem."
> (UNESCO 2003: p7).

'It's normal to be different' is the motto of EUMIE, a Master programme developed during an ERASMUS programme. It refers to the fundamental assumption underlying inclusion that diversity is the way things are and that is something to be celebrated. It implies a world where everyone is valued and where each contribution is seen to be valuable; a world where everyone's life is less rich if any one person or community is not part of it. Being enriched by diversity means that people are educated to live together and to reflect on their uniqueness (UNESCO 2001).

Within the EA consortium inclusion is also concerned with participation and with challenging policies or practices that lead to exclusion or to inequality of opportunity for all learners. The focus is not to determine what is deemed to be wrong with a person, child or adult, but to identify what needs to change to ensure that each person's right to the best education possible is upheld. Inclusion is concerned to enable all learners to participate fully in the culture of the school. It is about promoting policies that are concerned with all learners and practices that enable all learners. The realisation of such a vision for all learners will involve changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies in schools and teacher education. It is premised on a conviction that it is the responsibility of the education system in each country to educate all children (UNESCO, 1994). It will thus also involve changes to national policies, particularly to policies on issues such as assessment that traditionally have had a significant impact on learning and on the ways in which learners are categorised. It will also involve changes to the process of change, developing inclusive approaches to innovation that live by inclusive principles. Teacher education also has to change and the TE4I (= Teacher Education for Inclusion) programme seeks to contribute to this process.

In an inclusive context cooperation and democracy are crucial for all learners; children, young people, parents, teachers, carers, policy makers and researchers. In an inclusive school everyone is learning, children and young people, parents and professionals: no learner is a 'visitor', all are full participants.

Inclusion and Teacher Education

The question of inclusion is fundamentally about issues of human rights, equity, social justice and the struggle for a non-discriminatory society. No child is viewed as ineducable, and all children are entitled to quality education. There is still much to be done to achieve the European aspiration of a truly inclusive society. Whilst European policy is clear, the policies of individual member states are more variable. The implications of European policy on Inclusion have not always been worked through into, for example, policies on education. Thus the experiences of individuals with special needs in countries across Europe are variable. There are gaps in the curricula of many schools and Further and Higher Education establishments in the context of inclusive education. There are insufficient numbers of people who have a deep understanding of the principles and practices of Inclusive Education. The creation of a more inclusive educational society is likely to depend significantly on the emergence, in education, health and related disciples, of increasing numbers of people who have had opportunities both to engage with ideas of inclusive education and to work through the practical implications of these ideas for their life and work. Thus personal and professional development is the key to a more inclusive educational society.

"INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE", the 48th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION in Geneva, November 2008[2] recommends in section IV. Learners and Teachers for teacher education the following items:

16. Reinforce the role of teachers by working to improve their status and their working conditions, and develop mechanisms for recruiting suitable candidates, and retain qualified teachers who are sensitive to different learning requirements.
17. Train teachers by equipping them with the appropriate skills and materials to teach diverse student populations and meet the diverse learning needs of different categories of learners through methods such as professional development at the school level, preservice training about inclusion, and instruction attentive to the development and strengths of the individual learner.
18. Support the strategic role of tertiary education in the preservice and professional training of teachers on inclusive education practices through, inter alia , the provision of adequate resources.
19. Encourage innovative research in teaching and learning processes related to inclusive education.
20. Equip school administrators with the skills to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all learners and promote inclusive education in their schools.
21. Take into consideration the protection of learners, teachers and schools in times of conflict.

Taking the above into account, what conclusions can be drawn for teacher education:

The curricula in teacher education need a broader educational and international perspective to understand inclusion in the development of education. However, students need to be prepared for the difficulties which they are going to meet. A romantic concept of inclusion would be counter-productive.
Students need to understand that questions concerning inclusion are inextricably linked to problems concerning European education. The ambivalences and paradoxies of modern pedagogy put inclusion to the test and define it in a new way.
There are no easy solutions for the following tensions in our educational system, however, there may be developments (cp. Greiner, in : Strachota/Biewer/Datler 2009, S.123ff.)
A modern model of normality (maximum equality for everyone) and a post-modern model of variety (it is good to be different) are not getting on with each other.

- Unequal chances versus educational fairness
- achievement versus participation
- special needs versus selection
- standardisation versus individualisation
- autonomous school development (local profiles) versus international assessment
- control versus autonomy
- identity policies for individual groups versus global responsibility
- an increased need for resources versus resource limitation
- process assessment versus output assessment
- concern for special needs versus respect for diversity
- praise of heterogeneity versus collaborative learning

Students need to have an argumentative voice in these problem areas. As is commonly known - knowledge, skills, and attitudes to create "learning with people" are needed in these conflicting areas.

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[2] http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Dialogue/48th_ICE/CONFINTED_48-5_Conclusions_english.pdf

The following comments are essential for teacher education:

A praise of diversity cannot obscure the fact of increasing necessity for cooperation of joint aims. An emphasis on diversity and inclusion leads to tensions. Which competences do students need to support the individual and create the social space of learning? Which contradictions are opening up? What do practitioners say about their daily practice? How can we include their experiences in teacher education?

Depending on differing abilities and competences people need specialised roles (Kompetenzteilungen). Hierarchies of decisions are unavoidable if the whole system is to develop successfully. People need to learn to lead and to be led. To be able to distinguish one from the other and reunite it is a fine art - teacher education is also an introduction into leadership.

The central problem of post-modern, post-enlightenment (nachaufklärerischer) societies is the tension between sameness (treating everybody in the same way) and sameness (involving everybody) (cp. Menke 2000). Participation can jeopardise the outcome. We need answers as to how people who are against inclusion should take part in the discussion. Put into its extreme, the suppression of individuality is part of liberal equality. The formula "differences unite" may possibly cover the real problems. What if the differing wants something different, which is mutually exclusive? Who is going to decide? Increasingly, it is the available resources rather than arguments.

However: the indecisiveness of a system can be a consequence. Educational managers have to deal daily with the problem of different pressure groups who demand their own objectives in the name of heterogeneity.

These questions are motivated by the problems of a society that has lost its joint vision (unlike in the Enlightenment).

How to deal with difference?

There are differences that are grown and there are differences that are made, both desirable and undesirable. Differential lines are not natural but constructed. To be mindful of gender, culture, religion, achievement, and competences does not solve the problem of inequality. Variety cannot be a normative model. Variety is given to us to be shaped and moulded. What kind of variety is supported and which one is not, is normative. Sociology in teacher education demands the inclusion of inequality as an issue in this field, which has become blurred by the emphasis on variety.

European Enlightenment has promised equality, but it has done this by promoting homogeneity. The target (Subjekt) of Enlightenment is normative: rationality and autonomy belong to this. What about the "post-modern subjects"? Are these differently socialised? What concepts of mankind do our students have? Teacher education is not going to do justice to inclusion without theories about the subject and an explicit discussion of the concept of mankind. It is surprising that an ethical theory of the subject hardly figures in teacher education (apart from religious education, where it is too specific).

Students need a good introduction in newer theories of schooling.

Schools are expected to offer qualifications and provide democratic participation. Furthermore, schools do have a function of allocation (Allokationsfunktion) which is characterised by preparing students for different job situations and careers (the students' potential and talents are currently not in line with their realistic chances). Subsequently maximising special needs support leads to selection since talents are examined even more carefully.

What about the irreconcilable basic pedagogical paradox in which heteronomy is seen as a path to self-actualisation (Erlernen der eigenen Freiheit), as a path to education. How does a concept of inclusion deal with the essential and irreconcilable paradoxies (Illien 2005) of the educational system, and a student-related, societal and organisational paradox? Inclusion must

be organised as a compulsory aspect of education, on the other hand at the heart of it, it cannot be organised. Therefore this concept feeds on requirements that it cannot fulfil. That is why teacher education needs three dimensions (Orte):
Ability (Herstellens)
Knowledge – the reflexive distance to ability
Attitudes to distinguish the one from the other – wherein the profession finds its ethos.