

“Qualitative Analysis of Possibilities and Difficulties
of Inclusion of Quality”

(Paper presented at the VI Workshop of Qualitative Research in Psychology
“Epistemologies in Qualitative Research”.
Oulu, Finland, February 29th-March 2nd, 2008)

Samuel Gento
Antonio Medina &
Jorge Pina

Introduction

There are two terms that have recently emerged with strong meaning power in education: those terms are “diversity” and “inclusion” (Thomas, G. and Loxley, A., 2007). Although we could consider ourselves at the top of the watershed in our socio-pedagogical moment, these two terms are advancing towards the replacement of the previous ones with somehow similar meaning: “special educational needs” and “integration”.

The whole meaning of all four terms, and particularly the differences among each other are not completely clear; but it is, in general, expressed that “*diversity*” has a more horizontal content, in as much as it does not imply inferiority of any human being at all, because, essentially and in the end, everyone of us, as such human beings, are each other diverse and different. By contrary, the meaning of “special needs” implies that people suffering from such peculiarity have some personal disadvantage in relation to other human beings of their target group.

The term “*inclusion*”, initially proceeding from social contexts, involves the meaning that it creates settings where every human person, no matter his/her *diversity* or peculiarity, can act and behave in a normal way according to their possibilities. By contrary, integration has the meaning that we should work to facilitate handicapped, deficient, invalid or with special needs people their accommodation to a particular context that, initially, is not prepared for their “needs”, which, in the end, imply a personal condition of interiority. Collin, L. (2007: 9) considers that “the notion of special needs and fully inclusion provision is a contradiction in terms”

In fact, although there are some disagreements on its full extension throughout the whole educational system, for every student and for any particular peculiarity without considering how intense it is, “inclusion (...) like an inheritance that grows and become more productive from one generation to another, (...) has gained a remarkable foothold in our society” (Warnock, M., 2005: 22). And Cigman, R. (2007: XIX) stresses this way the advancement towards inclusion: “It is not about ‘all versus some’; it is about inclusion as opposed to integration. In particular, it is about advancing historically in our thinking about special education, which was originally shaped by the philosophy of segregation, was replaced by the philosophy of integration, and has been gradually introducing and refining the philosophy of inclusion”.

The advancement of societies with higher sensibility towards human rights for every person, together with progress in welfare societies and in technological development ask for an added effort oriented to create inclusive situations with every person, no matter his/her peculiar diversity, could develop him/herself and participate in our social and productive systems. The importance of this advancement, in a very rapidly transforming world, with an intense emergence of diversity of different types, stresses the relevance of the analysis of this theme of “Qualitative Analysis of Possibilities and Difficulties of Inclusion of Quality”.

The “*Regular Education Initiative (REI)*” appeared in the USA is, frequently, mentioned as the origin of the movement towards inclusion (Arnaiz Sánchez, 2005). This movement appeared during the 1990 decade, tried to reach the objective of including in ordinary or mainstreaming schools every student having any difficulty or special need. Some main defenders of this movement (Wang, M., Reynolds, M. & Walberg, H. (1995) and, together with them, Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1991) critic the effectiveness of special education implemented till then and put forward unification of special education and ordinary/mainstreaming education in a unique system that will include every person, no matter what his/her peculiarity be.

Theoretical background

Diversity

As we have mentioned before, the term “*diversity*”, with reference to any human being, means the individual peculiarity that characterises every person. Due to our personal constitution, and to a number of circumstances surrounding us, every one of us is different or diverse to any other one. This concept does not imply an idea of superiority or inferiority, but just an individual distinction that deserves respect and, of course, building up situations, context and means to facilitate that each one of us could develop his/her own potentiality and be able to contribute to the improvement of other people and societies where we are inserted in.

Although the term of diversity asks for human rights acknowledge for every person, it also involves the meaning that we are different in many aspects: physical, psychic, social, cultural, etc. Some of the features that characterise a particular persona could come from his/her genetic or innate peculiarity; some others could be due to his/her geographical context; some other ones could be caused by his/her immersion in a particular culture; some other ones could be due to other circumstances.

But, apart from the respect due to any person, as a human being, the responsible institutions and social agencies have the duty of giving every person the same opportunities of developing him/herself and to create the necessary conditions for any person could act and contribute to his/her development and to the other people’s progress. Coherent with this term content, Williams, F. (1992: 70) says: “By diversity I mean difference claimed upon a shared collective experience which is specific and not necessarily associated with a subordinated or unequal subject position”.

As a consequence, diverse of different people, no matter how intense the difference is, should not be considered inferior nor should they feel shameful of their

diversity: “The concept of difference needs both to shed its shameful connotations and to be retained so that people can use it to affirm who they are and what kind of impairment they struggle with” (Cigman, R., 2007: XXVI).

Inclusion

First followers of the inclusion movement, mainly at the end of 1980 and beginning of 1990, consider that difficulties experienced by some students with special needs inscribed at the educational system are the result of some specific ways or organizing schools and of teaching methodology used by such schools (Ainscow, JJ., 2001). In order to overcome such difficulties, the inclusion movement tries to reach equality and excellence for all students and not only for some of them (Arnaiz Sánchez, P., 2005: 28).

In summary, this movement tends to extend the desire of having an education of quality for all students, also for those having a profound diversity that could be due to increase or decrease in any particular feature. As Thomas, G. & Loxley, A. (2007: 125) declare, inclusion “is about providing a framework within which all children -regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin- can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with real opportunities at school”.

But in order to adapt itself to particular diversity of every student and to obtain the maximum results of every student, inclusive schools not only should adapt their *physical* facilities and their *organizational* structure and *functioning*, but they also need to accommodate their own *curriculum* in order to adapt it to every student’s potentiality, learning rhythm and personal style. Specifically referring to this last aspect, Cigman, R., 2007: XV) declares: “Inclusion is a process that maximises the entitlement of all pupils to a broad, relevant and stimulating *curriculum*, which is delivered in the environment that will have the greatest impact on their learning”.

Related to facilitating inclusive access to curriculum, Low, C. (2007: 11) declares: “Inclusion is a much about the ethos and social life of schools as it is about access to the taught curriculum. It is essential, therefore, to provide the range of educational and social opportunities that enable children to participate on an equal basis with their peers in order to become fully included members of the community”.

As a consequence of the extended entitlement, just mentioned, inclusive schools are those “which welcome everyone, remove barriers to learning, combat discriminatory attitudes and so on, as the basis for a just society” (Cigman, R., 2007: XX). Those schools must, therefore, “include children of mixed abilities, not only academically but in the sense of mixed difficulties, physical, sensorial, behavioural and so on” (Cigman, R., 2007: XXI).

Inclusion is, in our days, a world movement of social politics that tries to struggle against exclusion that, at different level, suffer some human beings who have particular features which diversify them from the majority of other people. In some countries (as in Chile or Brazil), inclusion is connected to assistance to handicapped people and to other marginal persons; in some other ones (from Central Europe or South Africa) it is linked to democratic processes of social and political restructuring (Arnaiz

Sánchez, P., 2005). Coherent to this general extension, “the whole educational system as a whole should be planned and developed to offer inclusive provision for the maximum number of those with special needs who can benefit from it” (Low, C., 2007: 13).

As movement of social politics, inclusion is based on International Declarations of general politics to be followed throughout the world and recommended by world organizations. More specifically, *bases of such movement* could be found out in *international documents* such as the following ones:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (of 1948);
- Convention of Child´s Rights (of 1989), particularly its article 2
- Declaration and Action Frame of Salamanca (of 1994), mainly its article 2

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by United Nations in 1948 declares in its article 2º.1: “Every person has all rights and freedoms proclaimed in this Declaration, without any distinction of race, colour, religion, political opinion or of any other type, national or social origin, economic situation, birth or any other feature”

The Convention of Child’s Rights, approved in 1989, states also in its article 2º.1: “Partner States will respect rights enunciated in this Convention and will guarantee their application to every child subject to its jurisdiction, without any distinction and independently of their race, colour, sex, idiom, religion, political or any other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, economic situation, physical disabilities, birth or any other child’s, parents’ or legal tutors’ condition”

In the *Salamanca’s Declaration*, approved in this Spanish city on June 10th 1994, Delegates of this Conference organized by UNESCO (with the attendance of 92 Governments) states: “We believe and proclaim that (...) people with special educational needs should have access to ordinary schools, which must integrate them with a pedagogy centred in the child and able to give satisfaction to his/her needs”.

Paradigm of quality

Although educational and pedagogical studies have tried to search for solutions to improve education, educational institutions and initiatives, the emergence of the paradigm of quality is been used as a reference for a new approach of education in today’s world. It is true that the movement pro quality paradigm -particularly in its version of totality-, has not initially appeared in educational or pedagogical contexts; but, apart from being an approach to be used as reference for education, this movement has strongly penetrated education and educational institutions.

Typical of this movement and paradigm evolution is the change of focus from the product quality (predominant till 1950s) to all the involved people’s participation (appeared from 1050s to 1970s) and, later one, to the relevance given to members’ satisfaction. Coherent to this evolution is the repercussion on the consideration of what would be the curriculum focus and education aim in the end.

Related to this new focus and aim is OECD declaration on schools and quality of teaching (1991: 64): "Youngsters join to parents, teachers and entrepreneurs in the general accusation that education fails in attaining non cognitive objectives, which all those sectors consider among the most important ones". The most useful consequence to be extracted from this statement is that education, to be considered as of true quality, must consider educating people not just as machines of acquiring knowledge, but as complex beings with multiple dimensions they could develop with educational impulse.

By following this focus hinted by OECD mentioned report, we define education of quality as "the intentional promotion, implemented by inter-relational and participative processes, of integral and integrating values of every human being's all dimensions, for him/her tending to his/her personal satisfaction and to the satisfaction of those who live with him/her in a particular context and environment" (Gento, S, 2002:76).

Undoubtedly, the extension of the principle of quality is intrinsically associated to the assumption of all human beings equity, as the condition of quality is referred to every human being, independently to his/her personal conditions and particular situation. And, apart from that, the union of the principles of quality, acceptance of diversity and inclusion assumption represents, not only an equitable opportunity for every person, but also a chance of pedagogical renovation for teachers and for educational institutions.

Quality educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings

As we have mentioned above, inclusion is extending all over the world, as the predominant political decision in relation to educational treatment of diversity. But, in order to implement such treatment in inclusive educational institutions, some requirements are necessary to reach a good level of quality.

Some requirements for an inclusive treatment of diversity of authentic quality are mentioned by different authors. We mention here some such requirements (Arnaiz Sánchez, P., 2005; Booth, T., 1998; Carrión, J.J., 2001; Dyson, A., 2001; Graden, J.L. y Bauer, A.M., 1999; López Melero, M., 1999; Sandoval, M., 2002; UNESCO, 2005; Wang, M., Reynolds, M. y Walberg, H., 1995):

- Whole society's modification of attitudes and beliefs
- Background equality and equity for everybody, with special attention to those living in vulnerable situations of suffering any discriminating type
- Insertion of educational activity within a widely extended social, cultural and economic plan with a strong interrelation school-society
- Increase of diverse peculiarities knowledge by all members of the educational community, mainly teachers and professionals in direct contact with students
- Teacher's training including the option of training within the educational institutions
- Students with special needs' attendance to mainstreaming classes and educational institutions with their target group
- Heterogeneous composition of students' grouping

- Reduction of educational institution size, to facilitate all members' interrelation and participation
- Availability of the necessary aids to students, teachers and the educational institution
- Curriculum adaptation to every student's personal needs, in order to obtain maximum effectiveness of every student's potentialities
- Use of enrichment programmes with gifted students
- Participation of educational community's all members, as inclusion is determined by professionals working together to promote every student's education
- All teachers' coordination and collaborative work, with interchange of experiences and without isolated and each other separate classes
- Promotion of collaborative learning among students, with mates' aid
- Use of practical strategies to attain education of quality for every student
- Parents' collaboration, as they are impending protagonists of their children's education: teachers (of special and mainstream education) joined work with students' parents
- Disappearance of competitiveness, which will be changed by supportive collaboration

Lipsky, D.K. & Gartner, A. (1998) identified six factors as playing a role in successful inclusion:

- Visionary leadership
- Collaboration
- Refocused use of assessment
- Funding
- Effective parental involvement
- Use of effective programme models and classroom practices.

With other perspective, in order to have a true quality educational treatment of diversity in inclusive contexts, we propose that it will be necessary the existence of some requirements such as the following ones:

- Suitable organization and planning
- Resources availability (material, personal)
- Appropriate resources management (material, personal, organizational)
- Accommodated methodology

The empirical study

We have above quoted the Warnock, M. statement (2005: 22) that "inclusion (...) has gained a remarkable foothold in our society". And it is also accepted that, in order to be successful, inclusion at school should have the corresponding expansion throughout the whole society surrounding the school: "Inclusivity can be promoted both at school and at wider community levels and (...) both efforts operate, as it were, reciprocally" (Thomas, G. & Loxley, A. (2007: 144).

But, although the term and concept of inclusion is generally accepted as a progressive social and pedagogical advancement and a principle towards we should advance, there is a question that emerges as we think about the real situation of our educational system, our schools and the professional situation of people working on both the system and the school. The question is: *is it really possible and appropriate in today's circumstances to impose inclusion throughout the whole educational system and at every school?*

Some voices claim that inclusion general extension is, in our current circumstances, an aspiration and a real utopia: “In other words, the prospect of the general education system being geared up in terms of staff, expertise and facilities to cater for every kind of disability as an integral part of its provision is something of a utopian ideal. However, when faced with examples of children failing in the mainstream and having to be rescued by special schools, the proponents of full inclusion are apt to turn this to their advantage and insist that the experience of mainstream was not an example of genuine inclusion at all” (Low, C, 2007: 9).

By thinking on this and other considerations and by considering the practical situation of our schools and educational institutions, together with educationalists' opinions, we transferred the radical question to the opinion of professionals and students concerned and involved with educational treatment of diversity. And, in order to collect information obtained from their opinions and to structure collective thinking on this relevant question, we implemented the empirical study we describe next

The problem to be studied

The problem that we have transferred to the people participating in our empirical research is: by considering the current situation of the educational system, educational institutions, the involved professionals and other concurrent circumstances, what are the *possibilities and difficulties of implementing inclusive quality educational treatment of diversity in our educational institutions?*

This problem was submitted to university students of the Master on Educational Treatment of Diversity we are implemented in our “Distance Education National University” (UNED), associated with three other European Universities. As the course is offered by distance modality, opinions were collected by using this modality. The 65 students registered on the Master course expressed their opinions at a forum opened to such purpose. But, in order to contrast their opinions and experience on this problem, they had previously studied and worked with one of the modules of this Master whose theme is “Educational Integration and Inclusion of Quality with People with Special Needs”.

The module was imparted for a fortnight. During this time, students had the opportunity of studying, working on and contrasting the contents of such module, structured on the following units:

- Didactic Unit 1.- The quality paradigm of education as a framework to integration and inclusion

- Didactic Unit 2.- Educational integration and inclusion for the quality of education
- Didactic Unit 3.- Scope and advantages of integration and inclusion
- Didactic Unit 4.- Overcoming obstacles to integration and inclusion
- Didactic Unit 5.- Modalities or types of educational integration or inclusion

Apart from these contents and other used sources, we suggested participants to think on requirements that would be necessary for the educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings that would accomplish demands proceeding from the quality paradigm.

Methodological approach

For collecting opinions on the put forward problem and to implement our research, we assumed as a basic approach the *phenomenological* one, for the study of phenomena as they manifest themselves in human beings' conscience (Lambert, J.H., 1764). The main feature of this approach is that it studies facts and phenomena parting from the consideration of how a group or community members interpret the world and reality surrounding them.

In fact, studies and researches that adhere themselves to this methodological approach make their discoveries by using strategies of qualitative type. Some features of the phenomenological -sometimes called *interpretative-symbolic- approach* are the following ones (Pérez Serrano, G., 1995: 33-39; Taylor, S.J. & Bodgan, R., 1986):

- It uses theory as a reflection in and from praxis
- It tries to understand reality
- It considers reality as a whole made up by interrelated parts
- It describes the context where phenomena are produced
- It centres research in phenomena and processes
- It deepens on facts different reasons
- It considers individuals as interactive and communicative subjects who share meanings
- It implies the researcher's involvement within the situation and context.

The researcher acting within this phenomenological approach -sometimes also named “hermeneutic”- does not establishes descriptions of a reality placed outside the particular human beings; by contrary, he/she tries to understand how such human beings create and understand their own spaces of life and coexistence. To this respect, Hoy, D.C., 1994: 264) sates: “The hermeneutic model asks for the extension of personal interpretations and its enrichment as they are opened to other interpretations”.

Qualitative research

As it has been stated above, the phenomenological approach (sometimes called “interpretative-symbolic” or “hermeneutic”) uses strategies of qualitative type to implement studies or researches. *Qualitative research* could be understood as the group of “detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and behaviours that

could be observed, with the consideration of what participant people say, their experiences, their attitudes, beliefs, thinking and reflection, as those are expressed by such participants" (Pérez Serrano, G., 1995: 55). Gotttees, J.P. & Le Compte, M.D. (1984) declare that: "The qualitative research would imply inductive, generative, constructing and subjective processes".

On this type of research the meaning grasping corresponds to the interpretative scope. But, in fact, this meaning grasping is necessary to understand phenomena. Dray, W. (1957) indicates that to understand human being's behaviours and phenomena interpretation, the following aspects should be considered:

- Circumstances where acts or phenomena happen
- Meaning of the situation for the protagonists
- Reasons, interests and proposals guiding activities or phenomena.

As typical features of the qualitative research the following ones could be mentioned (Pérez Serrano, G., 1995: 55-61; Taylor, S.J. & Bodgan, R., 1986: 20-22):

- The qualitative research is inductive: it usually starts with vaguely elaborated questions
- People, scenarios or groups are considered with a holistic perspective, which means: they are understood as a whole. Furthermore, such people are placed in a particular context, which should also be considered
- Researchers interact with object of research people, by considering these people's feelings and the emotional effect the research produces on them. The empathetic relationship between researcher and researched people, and among each other the latter ones, is a fundamental aspect of this type of research
- Researchers try to grasp reality as the involved people see and feel it, but this reality is considered as something close to such people. An important feature of qualitative research is the search of how the involved people feel and interpret a specific reality as the face it.
- Researchers try to elude their own beliefs, perspectives and attitudes, by considering fact and phenomena as if they happened for the first time
- Researchers consider that all perspectives are valuable and they accept and search for other people's detailed perspectives
- The researchers, by qualitatively studying every involved people, acquire a better knowledge of such people; but, protection of every person's rights, asks for caring each people's particular circumstance and if there is any suitable moment for an appropriate intervention
- The researcher tries to contrast the collected information to the participant people's opinions and activities
- Every scenario and every person can be object of qualitative research
- The qualitative researcher creates his/her own research strategies, as there are not many standardized ones. But researcher's active involvement could represent a partial and biased interpretation that should be avoided in as much as possible.

The collecting data technique

In order to collect data referred to possibilities and difficulties of the educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings, we used a technique suitable to the type of qualitative research and the methodological approach. The chosen technique was the *discussion group*, as a variety of conversations or dialogues. A typical group discussion is formed by a reduced group of people (the most appropriate size would be from eight to ten people) which for a reasonable enough time (from ninety to a hundred and twenty minutes) offers information in relation to a specific theme that is discussed by the group members (Canales, M. & Peinado, J., 1994; Ibáñez, J., 1986; Krueger, R.A., 1991; Lederman, L.C., 1990; Morgan, D.I., 1988; Tempelton, J.F., 1987). Some authors (Frey, J.H. & Fontana, A., 1991; Watts, M. & Ebbutt, D., 1987) call this technique “interview in group”.

To effectively use this technique and to appropriately collect information, it seems convenient to have a group member acting as moderator, or coordinator, to facilitate that discussion is implemented by treating the chosen theme. In relation to this theme, every group member may express him/herself by issuing opinions, beliefs, ideological focuses, interests, expectancies, etc. In summary, through members manifestations, it could be discovered how they perceive, know, interpret and transfer to activity any particular reality or specific theme.

During the group discussion, the participant members can express similar, different or even contradictory opinions. In some cases, it would be most appropriate to have some homogeneity among the group members (particularly when the purpose is to treat with intensity a specific theme or a matter of great intensity); in some other cases, it could be better that the group will express more heterogeneous opinions (for example, if we try to get information from different sectors in relation to a particular theme they are involved in). In some other cases, it could be more suitable to combine a somehow homogeneous degree in members’ interventions with a somehow heterogeneous one.

This technique of discussion group could be very useful to collect information with intensity and extension in relation to a particular aspect or theme needing opinions from different or from many people (Alvira, M.F., 1997). When the group discussion is implemented by using a written document, as a specifically designed project, every member’s intervention in relation to its design, development, adaptation and assessment will express not only the written text value but also the value of a dynamic and relational space (Medina, A. y Blanco, A., 1994).

A possible sequence of phases to be followed on this technique of group’s discussion could be the following ones we propose as a possible reference for those interested in its implementation:

1. Determination of the groups number which are going to participate (preferably among minimum two and maximum ten)
2. Definition of the number of people who will integrate each group (preferably among minimum six and maximum ten)
3. Selection of the members forming each group
4. Setting up of place and time of the meeting -the starting and the finishing one-
5. Definition of moderator’s or coordinator’s role: basically, creation of a relaxed atmosphere, promotion of participant’s intervention, directing the discussion to the theme to be treated

6. Definition of a system of recording information produced by the group (for example, by tape recording, video, etc.)
7. Analysis and systematization of collected information
8. Production of a draft report that will include the basic conclusions
9. Validation of such report with the participants’ intervention
10. Production of the final report of the group discussion.

The forum on inclusion possibilities and difficulties

As we have indicated above, the participants who gave information on the researched theme have been students of our Joint Master Degree on Educational Treatment of Diversity. As this course is implemented by distance modality, we had to adapt the technique of group discussion to the particular circumstances of such modality.

To such purpose, we set up an open forum on “possibilities and difficulties of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings”. Such forum was one of the activities, necessary for every student, held during the time we were implementing our module three on “Integration and Inclusion of Quality for Educational Treatment of Diversity” Throughout a fortnight we worked with our students on this module, they entered into the forum and expressed their opinions in favour of inclusion and against inclusion: in both cases, they had to offer reasons or arguments related to advantages and disadvantages of integration and inclusion for the educational treatment of diverse people.

In order to organize discussions and to obtain opinions in favour and against total integration or inclusion, we divided students following the module in two groups: one of them should argument in favour of total integration or inclusion; the other one should express opinions against it. But every participant should express what were the reasons (proceeding from sources of authority, their expertise or knowledge of practical situations) to adopt positions pro or against. The adopted position did not need to be their personal one (as we previously had decided the group where every participant would be included); but they had to study sources, structure ideas and emit opinions that could represent some people’s attitudes and manifestations.

As the forum was an open space where our students should insert opinions and, in some cases, refute other mate’s arguments, we did not need a permanent moderator. Nevertheless, Professors imparting the module penetrated sometimes in the forum to promote participation and discussion and to centre the debate on the proposed theme. The students’ participation was very intense and, as they manifested themselves, enjoyed the debate provoked by discussions around the matter. The atmosphere of the forum was very friendly and, after the forum, personal relationship improved very much between participants and Professors and among the students themselves.

Results

Participants’ intervention on the forum indicated that students following the Master are highly committed to educational treatment of diversity, have a previous

excellent preparation (a number of them have previous Degrees of Second University Cycle) and are highly motivated to following this course. Apart from that, it was clear that some of them have a very rich experience that has given them a very profitable expertise. All this factors, together with intervening Professors' s intense care of following up the forum with enthusiasm and creativity determined the production of very interesting results.

We will structures such results around the following aspects:

- Arguments in favour of inclusion
- Advantages of inclusion
- Difficulties for inclusion
- Causes that prevent inclusion of quality
- Factors that facilitate inclusion of quality

Coherent to the way we had previously planned the debate, contributions were more numerous on the last two aspects, as they represented some opinions existing in favour of inclusion and some other ones against it. Nevertheless, we refer next to contributions on the other three aspects.

Arguments in favour of inclusion

Main arguments expressed in favour of inclusion indicated than inclusion is:

- A fundamental right of every person
- Social, moral and legal duty
- Consequence of society ´s progress, which increases sensibility towards inclusion
- An extended and predominant world tendency: there is a general consensus on the need of expanding inclusion
- Demanded by international rules and regulations

One testimony offered by a participant female student is the following one:

"With a stated disability of 86%, I am registered at the UNED as a student of Master on "Educational Treatment of Diversity". For me it is a challenge; but I think inclusion is possible. We all must contribute, everyone in his/her situation, by helping other people and accepting reality that we are different".

Inclusion advantages

Advantages of inclusive educational treatment of diversity, compared to excluded or segregate treatment, mentioned at the forum are that inclusion:

- Is not more expensive than segregation
- Improves self esteem of people with intense diversity
- Improves student's motivation when there are specialized aids and cooperative learning

- Improves students’ performance when there also are specialized aids and cooperative learning
- Improves teachers’ motivation when there are flexible curriculum and team teaching
- Improves educational institutions’ educational and social focus, as inclusive centre assumes plurality and diversity existing in society

The opinion that inclusion is not more expensive than segregation is coherent with some implemented researches. In one of them, Crowther, D., Dyson, A. & Millward, A. (1998) demonstrated that with students of slight educational needs education at specific segregating institutions was more expensive than de implemented at mainstream schools.

But perhaps it would be appropriate to consider the statement made by Thomas, G. & Loxley, A (2007: 128-129): “The social costs of segregation, many disabled people have argued, are high: the cost of exclusion and segregation is the alienation of people who would otherwise had been able and willing to take a much fuller part in society”. And, in any case, “the case for inclusion probably rest more much more securely on its social value than considerations of economic efficiency” (Low, C., 2007: 7)

Difficulties for inclusion

Participants’ intervention on the forum of inclusion offered some opinions referred to difficulties of inclusion, which mention here:

- Full inclusion or integration has only been implemented in some few schools
- Some people with particular or intense diversity prefer specific or segregated educational institutions
- In mainstream or ordinary schools inclusion is more difficult in the following cases:
 - ✚ At the stage of Lower Secondary Education (in Spain: Obligatory Secondary Education: 12-16 year old)
 - ✚ With students of strong, multiple or profound diversity
 - ✚ With students of behavioural, character, emotional or personality problems
 - ✚ With students having communication difficulties (for example: autistic ones)
 - ✚ With students proceeding from other languages and cultures (who isolate themselves or who other host students isolate them from).
- Labour or work inclusion is difficult because:
 - ✚ Private companies do not facilitate work inclusion of people with strong and profound diversity (such companies do not accomplish the legal duty that entities with more than 50 workers must have, at least, 2% of handicapped ones).
 - ✚ There are not enough “Work Assistant Professionals” who help workers with strong and profound diversity

Causes that prevent inclusion of quality

A group of students who participated in the forum on inclusion to express arguments against full inclusion or integration expressed causes and factors that prevent implementation of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings. We mention, next, such causes and factors:

- Social negative attitudes:
 - ❖ Welfare state precariousness
 - ❖ Increase of differences between rich and poor people
 - ❖ Social Consumerism
 - ❖ Social competitiveness
 - ❖ Egotism
- Environment and social context deficiencies:
 - ❖ Architectural barriers
 - ❖ Derogative expressions (handicap, deficiency, inability, disability, diminution, etc.)
 - ❖ Negative influx of communication and information media (which transmit negative roles, stereotypes, derogatory terms or expressions, etc.)
 - ❖ Associationism (which, sometimes, segregates more than include)
 - ❖ Some parents' negative attitudes
- Educational politics deficiencies:
 - ❖ Politicized educational decisions, oriented to power acquisition or maintenance
 - ❖ Unviable educational political regulations (particularly impossible in rural settings)
 - ❖ Educational approaches of just economical effectiveness
 - ❖ Un-accomplishment of sectoring principle (as some students are taken to other far sectors)
 - ❖ Fugacity of educational legislation (as fundamental educational laws change every four years)
 - ❖ Lack of attention to people with profound diversity (or difficulties)
- Educational institutions deficiencies:
 - ❖ Students' negative attitudes towards mates with strong and profound diversity or difficulties (these attitudes are less frequent in specific segregated schools)
 - ❖ Inappropriate curricula design
 - ❖ Lack of collaborative intervention of teachers and parents
- Teachers' and other educational professionals' negative attitudes:
 - ❖ Uncertainty to face a reality that overcomes them and that is not foreseen (as for example, strong immigration)
 - ❖ Fear of professional failure
 - ❖ Excessive concern on academic performance (with unconcern for moral, social and other values).
 - ❖ Lack of conviction of inclusion need
 - ❖ Inadequate teachers' selection
 - ❖ Teacher's lack of authority (to counteract negative attitudes)
 - ❖ Training deficiencies
 - ❖ Lack of dedication (sometimes)

- Shortage of material resources:
 - ❖ Lack of economic resources
 - ❖ Existence of architectural barriers in educational institutions
 - ❖ Lack of didactic materials adaptation
- Shortage of personal resources
 - ❖ High ratio of students/teacher, particularly in lower secondary education and baccalaureate
 - ❖ Lack of aiding services
 - ❖ Lack of advisers (in some Communities, as in Canary Isles, each adviser has to advice 800 students)
 - ❖ Lack of specialist on language treatment (in some Communities, as in Canary Isles, each language specialist has to assist 1200 students)
 - ❖ Lack of multi-professional teams at schools (to promote personalized interventions)
- Inappropriate methodology:
 - ❖ Maladjustment of Individual Curriculum Adaptations
 - ❖ Learning by heart predominance
 - ❖ Lack of students' and parents' collaborative intervention

Factors that facilitate inclusion

Other group of students participating in the forum expressed arguments in favour of inclusion. Although their role was to defend inclusion, some of them declared that inclusion is, in general, easier with students of sensorial difficulties (for example, of vision or hearing) and with motion problems. By contrary, they coincided with those who mentioned difficulties for inclusion by indicating that this is more difficult with people having problems of communication (for example, autistic ones) and with those having problems of behaviour.

The participants in this group expressed, in general, the opinion that inclusion is defendable and appropriate when the necessary resources, organization and methodology are accommodated to the students' type and degree of diversity. They manifested that, in general, our society and educational system are advancing towards improving settings and means suitable to inclusion, although they admitted that there is still much to be done in order to allow for full inclusion in the educational treatment of diversity if that is to be of quality.

Factors facilitating inclusion have been systematised around the following ones:

- Increase of social sensibility. Manifestations of such sensibility are aspects such as the following ones:
 - ❖ Expansion of human rights respect
 - ❖ Extension of equity and compensation principles
 - ❖ Consolidation of normalization principle
 - ❖ Emergency of more open and supportive societies
 - ❖ Spreading of quality of education for every person.

- International organizations doctrine, recommendations and regulations (mainly UN and UNESCO) that suggest that educational treatment of diversity should be done in inclusive settings.
- Legal coverage proposing inclusion.

This coverage appears, for example at the Organic Spanish Law of Education (Law 2/2006 of January 3d.), that in its Title II, article 74, states: “Schooling of students having educational special needs will be ruled by the principle of normalization and *inclusion* (not in italics in the original text) and will secure their un-discrimination and effective equality for the access and permanence at the educational system, which will allow for flexible measures of educational levels, when it will be considered necessary”

On its Preliminary Title, chapter I, article 1.e, the same law admits, as one of the educational system principles: “Flexibility to accommodate education *to diversity* (not in italics in the original text) of abilities, interests, expectancies and needs of students, and to the changes happened in students and society”.
- More material resources availability in educational institutions, although physical structures and material means should be still be improved and increased
- More personal resources formed by specialist professionals acting within mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, professionals should still increase their effort to sometimes compensate shortage of such resources
- More flexibility of the educational system, as it allows for curriculum adaptations, curricular diversification, curriculum accommodation to vocational training, reinforcement and compensatory programmes or transitional classes for immigrant people
- Methodological advances that propose strategies of personalization or individualization, interactive or cooperative learning, parents’ participation, teachers’ team teaching, etc.
- Associationism, which some students (as it was previously mentioned) considered as a factor preventing inclusion, was by some others estimated as a promoter of inclusion. Some Spanish associations that shelter people with different manifestations of diversity were mentioned, such as FIAPAS (Spanish Confederation of Deaf People’s Parents and Friends), Spanish Association of Prader-Willi syndrome, ANAMIS (National Association of Supporting Disabled People), ASZA (Association of Deaf People), ONCE (National Organization of Blind People), etc.

Conclusions and proposals

The theoretical background has showed that educational treatment of diversity is a term that expands and consolidates itself in our country and, in general, throughout the world. Such study also has manifested that inclusion is the best approach for such treatment in most the cases; but, for this treatment to be of authentic quality, some recourses and requirements are necessary. And, apart from that, educational treatment of

diversity in separate settings and with specialised professionals could be justified in cases of extreme difficulty or profound diversity.

The empirical study has corroborated that our societies and educational systems should advance towards the extension of inclusion. But for educational treatment in such settings to be of quality it is necessary to overcome some difficulties, to have available recourses, to accommodate curriculum designs and to introduce some specific methodologies.

The researching team who has worked on this research will try to expand this study and its results: not only among responsible authorities and involved professionals, but also among researchers interested in the matter. It is also the purpose of the researching team to continue studying and researching possibilities and difficulties of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings and of quality. We will do it in our own country and in other ones where we have colleagues enthusiastically working with us in the research project and in our Joint Educational Master of Educational Treatment of Diversity.

Bibliographic references

- AINSCOW, J.J. (2001). *Desarrollo de Escuelas Inclusivas. Ideas, Propuestas y Experiencias para Mejorar las Instituciones Escolares*. Madrid: Nancea.
- ALVIRA, M.F. (1997). *Metodología de la Evaluación de Programas: Un Enfoque Práctico*. Buenos Aires: Lumen-Humanitas.
- ARNAIZ SÁNCHEZ, P. (2005). "Fundamentos de la educación inclusiva". In ALBA PASTOR, C., SÁNCHEZ HÍPOLA, M.P., RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ, J.A. (Coords.). *Jornadas de Cooperación Educativa con Ibero América sobre Educación Especial e Inclusión Educativa*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación – Universidad Complutense, pp. 25-43.
- BOOTH, T. (1998). "The poverty of special education: theories to the rescue?". In CLARK, C., DYSON, A. y MILLWARD, A. (Eds.). *Towards Inclusive School?*. London: Routledge, pp. 79-89.
- CANALES, M. y PEINADO, J. (1994). "Grupos de discusión". DELGADO, J.M. y GUTIÉRREZ, J. (Coords.). *Métodos y Técnicas cualitativas en Ciencias Sociales*. Madrid: Síntesis.
- CARRIÓN, J.J. (2001). *Integración Escolar: ¿Plataforma para la Escuela Inclusiva?*. Málaga: Aljibe
- CIGMAN, R. (2007). Editorial Introduction". In CIGMAN, R. (Ed.) *Included or Excluded*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. XV-XVIII.
- COLLIN, Low (2007). "Moderate inclusion and the case for special schools". In CIGMAN, R. (Ed.) *Included or Excluded*. Abongon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 3-14.
- CROWTHER, D., DYSON, A. y MILLWARD, A. (1998). *Cost and Outcomes for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in Special and Mainstream Schools* (Research Report RR 89). London: DfEE
- DRAY, W. (1957). *Laws and Explanations in History*. London: Oxford University Press.
- DYSON, A. (2001). "Special needs in the twenty-first century: where we've been and where we are going". *British Journal of Special Education*, 28 (1): 24-29
- FREY, J.H. & FONTANA, A. (1991). "The group interview in social research". *The Social Science Journal*, 28 (2): 175-187.

- GENTO, S. (2002). *"Instituciones Educativas para la Calidad Total"*. Madrid: La Muralla.
- GOTTEES, J.P. & LE COMPTE, M.D. (1984). *Etnografía y Diseño Cualitativo en Investigación Educativa*. Madrid: Morata.
- GRADEN, J.L. y BAUER, A.M. (1999). Enfoque colaborativo para apoyar al alumnado y profesorado de aulas inclusivas. In STAINBACK, S. Y STAINBACK, W. (Eds.). *Aulas Inclusivas*. Madrid: Narcea, pp. 103-117.
- HOY, D.C. (1994). "Critical theory and critical history". In HOY, D.C. & MCCARTHY, T. (Eds.). *Critical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 101-214.
- IBÁÑEZ, J. (1986). *Más Allá de la Sociología. El Grupo de Discusión: Teoría y Crítica*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- KRUEGER, R.A. (1991). *El Grupo de Discusión. Guía Práctica para la Investigación Aplicada*. Madrid: Pirámide.
- LAMBERT, J.H. (1990) *Neues Organon oder Gedanken*. Berlin: Akademie (1st. Edition, 1764)
- LEDERMAN, L.C. (1990). "Assessing educational effectiveness: the focus group interview as a technique for data collection". *Communicative Education*, 38.
- LIPSKY, D.K. & GARTNER, A. (1998). "Factors for successful inclusion: learning from the past, looking forwards to the future". In VITELLO, S.J. & MITHAUG, D.E. (Eds.). *Inclusive Schooling: National and International Perspectives*". Mahwah, N.J.; Erlbaum.
- LÓPEZ MELERO, M. (1999). "Ideología, diversidad y cultura: del homo sapiens al homo amantis". SÁNCHEZ PALOMINO, A. y cols. (Coords.). *Los Desafíos de la Educación Especial en el Umbral del Siglo XXI*. Almería: Universidad de Almería, pp. 31-60.
- LOW, Collin (2007). "A defence of moderate inclusion and end of ideology". In CIGMAN, R. (Ed.) *Included or Excluded*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 3-21
- MEDINA, A. & BLANCO, A. (1994). "La investigación – acción en la autoevaluación institucional". CARDONA, J. (Coord.). *Metodología Innovadora de Evaluación de Centros Educativos*. Madrid: Sanz y Torres, pp. 1 – 47.
- MORGAN, D.I. (1988). *Focus Group as Qualitative Research Method*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- OECD (OCDE). (1991). *Escuelas y Calidad de Enseñanza*. Madrid: Paidós/MEC.
- PÉREZ SERRANO, G. (1995). *Investigación Cualitativa*. Buenos Aires: Docencia.
- SANDOVAL, M. (2002). "Hacia un modelo educativo inclusivo". UNIVERSIDAD DEL PAÍSE VASCO. *Congreso Inter-Universitario de Organización de Instituciones Educativas: "Retos para la Próxima Década en la Unión Europea y sus Implicaciones Organizativas"*. San Sebastián: Universidad del País Vasco.
- STAINBACK, S. & STAINBACK, W. (1991). "Schools as inclusive communities". In STAINBACK, W. & STAINBACK, S. (Eds.). *Controversial Issues Confronting Special Education: Divergent Perspectives*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- TAYLOR, S.J. & BODGAN, R., (1986). *Introducción a los Métodos Cualitativos de Investigación*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- TEMPELTON, J.F. (1987). *Focus Group as a Guide for Marketing and Advertising Professionals*. Chicago: Probus Publishing Company
- THOMAS, Gary and LOXLEY, Andrew (2007). *Deconstructing Special Education and Constructing Inclusion*. Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Open University Press-McGraw Hill (1st edition 2001).

- WANG, M., REYNOLDS, M. y WALBERG, H. (1995). "Serving students at the margins. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (4), pp. 12-17.
- WARNOCK, M. (2005). *Special Educational Needs. A New Look*. London: Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.
- WATTS, M. y EBBUTT, D. (1987). More than sum of the parts: research methods in group interviewing". *British Educational Research Journal*, 13 (1): 25-34.
- WILLIAMS, F. (1992). "Somewhere over the rainbow: universality and diversity in social policy". MANNING, N. & PAGE, R. (Eds.). *Social Policy Review*. Canterbury: Social Policy Association.

Internet references

- <http://www.europa.eu.int/pol/educ/index-em.htm>: Educational Training and Youth in the European Union.
- www.enropean-agency.org: European Agency for Development in Special Needs.
- <http://www.ceapat.org>: Centro Estatal de Autonomía Personal y Ayuda Técnica (CEAPAT), del Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales.
- <http://www.discapnet.es>: Discapnet, iniciativa para el fomento de la integración social y laboral de personas con discapacidad, patrocinada por la Fundación ONCE y el Fondo Europeo para el Desarrollo Regional.
- <http://www.isaac-online.org>: ISAAC (International Association of Augmentative and Alternative Communication).
- <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/search/results>: Report on Inclusive Education and Pupil Achievement in the UK.
- <http://www.nc.uk.net/ld/gg>: UK national curriculum adaptation and assessment.
- <http://www.unesco.org>: UNESCO.

(1) Department of Didactics, School Organization and Specific Didactics
Faculty of Education, UNED
C/ Senda del Rey, 7
28040-MADRID
Tf. 34-91-3987647
Fax. 34-91-3986678
sgento@edu.uned.es