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## **Theoretical and pedeutological research output for inclusive education in the multicultural world<sup>1</sup>**

**Streszczenie:** W artykule zaprezentowano główne teoretyczne i socjopolityczne argumenty tworzące tło dla inkluzji edukacyjnej. Uwypuklono w tym zakresie niektóre ważne zagadnienia związane z implementacją idei inkluzji w edukacji na gruncie humanistycznym i demokratycznym. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na tzw. kluczowe kompetencje nauczycieli jako uczestników edukacji włączającej, a także na wymagania wobec personelu zarządzającego instytucjami oświatowymi. Artykuł prezentuje pewne sposoby rozwiązywania problemów w przyszłości, głównie poprzez edukację i szkolenie nauczycieli.

**Słowa kluczowe:** inkluzja społeczna, edukacja inkluzyjna, edukacja specjalna, prawa człowieka, tolerancja, uczciwość

### **Introduction and historical context**

Inclusion in education is a current phenomenon that is gradually making the previous tendency of segregated education at schools obsolete. First, it is necessary to point out that modern education of children and pupils with specific educational needs (today pejoratively referred to as “segregated”) in developed countries was at a high educational level. In Czechoslovakia and subsequently in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, as well as in Poland, it was performed in specialized institutions or special classrooms while receiving high-quality special education support. The number of children in such classes was much lower than in regular schools, and thus the conditions for education were quieter, more focused and more specialized. Both the teachers and the teaching staff received good undergraduate training at the master’s level and they continued their lifelong learning within post-graduate

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education. Already in the 1980s, the outdated educational practices were rendered completely obsolete, as these would prevent SEN children from continuing their education if they were capable to do so. It was unacceptable to disqualify these children or to harm them in any way.

There were academic institutions that developed the issue of special education based on humanistic principles. Support and special education systems have been developed for various types of special educational assistance and therapy (surdopaedia, typhlopaedia, etopaedia, somatopaedia, etc.). Special expert tools and utilities were in place, regularly upgraded, to support and facilitate the education processes. In this environment, humanistic requirements such as: respect for each individual's personality, tolerance, the right to education, individualization in education, the formulation of educational goals, or the choice of educational procedures were introduced even before the mainstream schools began to apply these. Specialized facilities developed therapeutic-educational procedures and a number of technical and didactic support aids and devices. There was a network of not only elementary special schools, but also secondary vocational schools and training centers for pupils with specific educational needs. The main objective in the development of special education as a scientific field and its practical application was to focus on minimizing the consequences of a handicap of a particular child and on supporting his/her education capabilities and personal development.

What we can basically summarize about this period: the phase of special pedagogy development and the development of specialized pedagogical care, from the pedagogical point of view, without a question contributed towards the development of pedagogy as a science, but also to pedeutology as the theory of the teacher profession. It also brought high quality and functional specialization within the teaching profession. Within the population years, the number of children and pupils with no education, who did not receive even a minimum of vocational, training, was gradually minimized. Many of these children had the possibility to grow up and enter the world of the adults with at least partial training to be self-sufficient within their personal and professional life. We may even suggest that some approaches were not segregating, but even had an exclusive level. From the perspective of the state and the funding of these schools, the "per capita" funding was three times higher than that of the regular schools.

## Value principles of inclusion

The transition to inclusive education means reflecting on the topic: the value bases of inclusion within education. The main ideas and principles that support this trend can be found within the general values of a democratic society. These values are an unquestionable argument – for inclusive education, they are represented by the traditional values: *human dignity, fairness and tolerance*.

Ideas preferring the inclusive approach in education have mainly emerged as a response to the ongoing prejudices or ideological trends:

- a) children and pupils enrolled into the curriculum of special education were subject to labeling, i.e. marked as non-educable, more difficult to educate, or socially excluded from the mainstream education;
- b) inclusion of children into the so-called separate, or special education meant for them a permanent inclusion and loss of their personal hope for achieving comprehensive education and the ability to find their place within the society;
- c) special education has become the means to remove even those “mainstream” children, whose deficit has been caused by their social handicap – less encouraging environment, the lacking support from parents, and this gradually intensified the image that school and institutional education are unable to saturate a socially determined deficit.

However, all these reasons contain a serious contradiction to the fundamental principles inherent to the idea of inclusion. These are cited by the authors (Vančíková, Porubský and Kosová, 2017, pp. 7) as “value pillars of inclusive culture that can be perceived as a goal that matters and which society seeks to strive and fight for. Such value pillars of inclusive school include human dignity, fairness and tolerance”.

- Human dignity – the basis is an axiological imperative formulating the principles of inclusion. Inclusion, according to Rajský (according to Kosová, 2017, p. 8), is a desirable moral and social consequence of philosophical and religious beliefs about the equality and dignity of all people regardless of their characteristics (health, gender, wealth, power, social moral status, origin and affiliation). Man has the right to his/her human dignity since the prenatal period, and perceiving human dignity as a moral principle has permanently removed any tendencies of superiority from the educational environment and reflections on education.

And this is not only a matter of superiority in terms of race, gender, wealth differences, health and other dispositions, but also in terms of the status of a functional position. This means that even teachers, with all their responsibilities, must never act and behave in such a way that would violate human dignity and integrity of a child's personality.

- Fairness (Rawls, 2007) – equality in the delegation of rights and responsibilities. However, this premise loses its cogency, when there is only fairness in granting of rights, but the responsibilities are not met equally among the individuals, either because they are not capable to do so (weaker, younger, less competent), or because they do not want to and only lay demands. Fairness in education and inclusion are based on the belief that all people are equal and have the same human rights. Equality means that we do not judge people as being in accordance with standards and being different from the standard population. Such unequal perception can result in two forms of segregation: exclusion from the community (non-compliant with the standard) or protection (disproportionate on the expense of those that comply). Both of these extreme approaches are morally dangerous for a healthy perception of a fair school. Therefore, the degree and form of protection of the weaker against unfairness must not exceed a certain level in order not to handicap those, who do not need protection.
- Tolerance (Petöcz, 2015) – inclusion is a democratic phenomenon and democracy cannot work without fair cooperation and tolerance of the diversity and differentness (age, gender, religion, physical and mental abilities). However, tolerance is, according to Vančík-Luptáková (2008, p. 19), “a multidimensional phenomenon that is set in an environment of conflicting opinions, different views of the world, in an environment that by its nature tends to cause conflict”. That is why several authors discuss the concept of tolerance, whether it is just a “well-managed intolerance”, i.e. indifferent approach towards differentness (Seiler and Seiler, 1997), or a conscious and fully respected right of each individual to his or her special and distinctive self-expression, including fundamental differentness. Therefore, inclusive education as an environment open to all, expects the attitudes of the members of such a school to be open to all sorts of differentness. Since it is mainly a sphere of prejudices and attitudes, it is for now very idealistic to assume that it will be easy to change or overcome the natural human phobia, caution, reserved approach towards all kinds of differentness. The main reason for

discussing tolerance is the argument: it is not a question of whether to tolerate skin color, health, or ethnicity, but it should encourage a deeply human and democratic principle: to tolerate a person as a human being and an individual.

### **Diversity of society and culture in the world of school**

However, a diversified society is not just a romantic return to natural differentness. It is not only a positive perception of differentness as a principle. Such a society encourages new clashes of *cultural, social, ethnic, religious and language groups*. In this environment, the requirements for many professions are undergoing fundamental changes, and there is also a need to change people's attitudes. Attitudes, as the most difficult to influence substrate of human uniqueness, are therefore the most critical obstacle of embracing inclusive culture. Diversified society:

- creates new situations in social and school conditions,
- sets new objectives for school administrators and school management,
- gives teachers new tasks, requires them to gain new knowledge, new skills.

However, the humanistic and highly moral values face the current pragmatic trends, which impose completely different demands on people within a diversified society. However, these do not clearly have negative, undemocratic and intolerant character, they are based within the very nature of humans. This is emphasized by the way of life today, as well as by the sense of necessity that is demanded and proclaimed on a daily basis. These mainly include:

- individualism and the pursuit of personal well-being;
- the ability to compete and be better, faster, richer than the others;
- success is considered a measure of individual's quality;
- a strong and resilient approach towards challenges is required even from children at schools;
- respect for others becomes a risk for losing your own opportunities.

How can these conflicting tendencies be reconciled in today's society? This question creates the framework for the pedagogical concept of inclusive education. It raises questions that translate into the daily teaching practice of teachers, and these questions are to be answered at the highest legislative level:

- How to educate different children fairly in today's school?
- How to tolerate differentness and perform on a standard level?

- How to respect the dignity of each pupil and keep the dignity of the teacher?
- How to educate a strong, resilient individual able to cope with competitive situations at school and the labor market?

The diversity of society is not final yet and its development is very difficult to predict.

Very different children attend nowadays schools:

- requirements for education – gifted, talented, reduced intellectual capability, specific learning disorders, behavioral disorders, social diversity and social exclusion,
- educational expectations of parents – from protectionist approaches to highly ambitious people who use their children to project their own ideas and visions,
- language, speech – not only the diversity of the mother tongue, but also other language semantic code,
- difference in values and value preferences,
- religion as a source of learning about piety and humanity acts in a religious conflict as the source of intolerance, hostility, cruelty,
- culture – as a form of coexistence, values, rituals.

### **Diversity of society – new problems and new needs for education**

Social diversity, multiculturalism and social diversity provide phenomena that enrich the society. They also bring about new problems and their solution cannot only take the form of interventions. The new situation requires to prepare the members of the society for perspective solutions. What does the diversity induce within the society?

- People of different cultures meet in a society that has been until recently homogenous. Within their own culture, these people also enforced cultural and social stereotypes, equality, but only among the equal. They seek to fit in, but they also want to preserve their cultural background.
- People of different cultural, social and religious communities work together with different values and habits. They are to achieve a common goal, which may not have the same meaning and significance for their different values.
- Children with different educational capabilities and values are educated, but at schools that are evaluated and assessed by the same measure-

ment tools. These measurements prioritize success and educational standards.

- The language of education opens up to completely new situations, not only the content, but also the external form of the curriculum are changing; new, international, intercultural and sometimes inconsistent communications are being introduced.

It's very important that the concept of inclusion becomes a part and parcel of the attitudes held by the members of society and, in this case, mainly of teachers and pupils, so that the adjective "inclusive" would be become obsolete. Just as a century ago, when the schools segregated by gender disappeared from our society, and today boys and girls sit side by side at their school desks. Nowadays, no one calls a regular school "co-educated". However, even after the merging the boys and girls schools, the attitudes of some teachers persisted 'limiting' the ideas about the education of girls. Even the ideas of parents still kept this stereotype alive for a long time. However, with the exchange of generations, nowadays the university educated women outnumber men. It is similar to the present situation, when the experts proclaim it is natural for different children to learn together.

Several countries introduced initiatives, supported both by the legislation and by the educational activities for teachers. However, what is still missing and necessary: to sway the attitudes of members of the non-expert public and especially parents. Parents, according to the research done by Vančíková (et al 2018), are the group that most significantly fosters the idea of educating their children in the "best society", and this attitude is mostly expressed by the well-off parents. The above publication presents the results of the most comprehensive research carried out in Slovakia so far, with the aim to follow the real state, as well as the social representations of the inclusive education participants. Under the project VEGA 1/10732/19, Mariana Cabanová focuses on teachers' attitudes towards the diversity in education in relation to selected characteristics of teachers (2015; Cabanová, 2017) The aim of this research is to find out how the gender, type of school and the type of personal qualities correlate with the tendency to tolerate, accept and willingly solve problems of inclusion in education, but also with the concerns and xenophobic attitudes of teachers. Since it is a deep overlap into the educational and qualification issues, i.e. pedeutology, this problem must be seen in the context of professional standards, or teachers' competences.

Particularly significant is the overlap into the human rights issue, which is consistently and in connection with international documents elaborated



in the collective work *Právo na vzdelanie a jeho kľúčové aspekty* (Right to education and its key aspects) (Horná-Petócz, 2015) and encouraged the current implementation of inclusion into schools based on the human rights principle, including the National Action Plan for Children 2013–2017.

### **Teacher competences – is the “Inclusive” competence a specific category?**

Most countries joined the EQF (European Qualification Framework) at the beginning of this century. Competency standards were developed to unify the requirements for professionals and their potential mobility on the European, or global labor market. The original purpose was to unify the requirements, but it also brought some convention. Through such a convention, the Slovak Republic also committed to meet the European standards for teachers, and measures were taken to unify teacher training, both in terms of type, as well as the content. In particular, the content currently reflects serious objectives connected with inclusive education.

There is a dilemma: is the attitude to inclusion included within the context of professional competences, or is it a specific category?

The competence profile of Slovak teachers, which was defined in 2005 (Kasáčová, 2006), created a construct of teaching competencies in the given structure, including the system of continual education. (Babiaková, 2008) In particular, the educational activities in the process of professional development have largely become a platform for developing and shaping attitudes towards tolerance, fairness in education and the respect for human rights.

- A dimension focused on children/learners – uniqueness, social relationships, individual education needs
- A dimension focused on educational content and process
- A dimension focused on self-development – lifelong education, the ability to reflect one’s own skills and competences, ability to cooperate in a team, ability to accept professional and expert evaluation and help.

The main problem is that, in real life, without substantial supervisory assistance from a team of professionals, inclusive education is a highly demanding, if not unfulfillable, requirement to a common teacher. Researches done by Vančíková (2018), investigating the work of the members of inclusive teams, provide important findings. In addition to teachers’ attitudes, a very important role plays also the support within the team, professional intervention of expert staff: psychologist, social pedagogue, teacher assistant.



A comprehensive approach requires management and coordination of inclusive teams from the position of school management staff, cooperation between the team members, accepting the idea of establishing inclusive teams at schools, cooperation of their members with teachers and parents.

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## Theoretical and pedagogical research output for inclusive education in the multicultural world

**Abstract:** The paper presents the main theoretical and socio-political arguments that form the background for inclusion within education. Therefore, it highlights some of the serious issues of implementing the ideas of inclusion into education

on a humanistic and democratic basis. What is particularly focused on are the specific competencies of teachers as the key players in inclusive education, as well as on the requirements of the management staff of educational institutions. The article presents some ways of solving these issues in the future mainly through the training and education of teachers.

**Keywords:** social inclusion, inclusive education, special education, human rights, tolerance, fairness

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