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Inclusion And Integration On Special Education

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Abstract

Today, nearly 25 years after shifting from integration to inclusion in the theoretical approach in special education, we postulate two questions: what is exactly meant by integration and inclusion? And, still more important: how do they differ in practice? We seek to answer them from the relational sociology (by Donati) taking into consideration the social consequences that result from each approach. By the appliance of the AGIL scheme as a heuristic for the observation and analysis of relationships, we emphasize on the significance of “education for all”, “equality” and “difference”. Our conclusion is that there is a semantic confusion between “inclusion” and “integration” which makes us consider necessary to recover their original meaning since integration is the approach that best suits the purposes of special education.

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1. Introduction

The "Education for All" (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide equal quality basic education to all children, youth and adults. This commitment arose in the context of the *World Conference on Education for All* of UNESCO held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990) and was later revised and discussed in the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* in 1993; the *World Conference on Special Needs Education. Access and Quality* held in 1994; the *International Conference of Dakar* in 2000 and the *International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* 2006. What later on has been known as the "Salamanca Statement", is the result of the World Conference held in 1994 where the term "inclusion" appeared for the first time in the context of special education. The use of this term meant a step beyond the concept of "integration", which was used until then to designate the actions towards integrating children and young people

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with special needs in mainstream education and community. As reflected in the Salamanca Statement, “the experience in many countries demonstrates that the integration of children and youth with special educational needs is best achieved within inclusive schools that serve all children within a community. It is within the context of special educational needs can achieve the fullest educational progress and social integration” (UNESCO, 1994:18). The aim of this paper is to make a distinction, semantic and theoretically, between the concepts of ‘inclusion’ and ‘integration’; identify the sociological logic underlying each of them and analyze the diverse social-educational practices that derive from both.

2. The shift from integration to inclusion in special education

A glance at the history of special education leads to consider the great advances that have been reached throughout the twentieth century in which has been reached a great development. In this development, the authors distinguish four stages (Buchem, 2013: 387-395): a) exclusion: people with disabilities or special needs were excluded from all social contexts (family, school, community); b) segregation: it was understood that they required and were likely to be educated but still, remained separated from the rest of society; c) integration: in this stage, the public schools were required to create new spaces for the students with special needs so they could socialize with the other non-disabled students. Within those “spaces” were regular classrooms, special education classrooms and pull out services (Franklin, 1996: 18); d) inclusive stage: social structures (classrooms, schools, communities) and socio-educational actions are designed from the outset considering the students with special needs. This last stage began with the Salamanca Statement in which the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education, representing ninety-two governments and twenty-five international organizations, reaffirmed their commitment to “Education For All” (Jomtien, 1990) proclaiming five principles that would structure special education policies and practices (UNESCO, 1994: VIII-XIX):

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
3. Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
4. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
5. Regular schools with 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 and effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system.

These five principles respond to a question that has repeatedly arisen in the field of special education: *Which is the best place for students with special needs?* The first author to ask this question was Dunn in 1968, seven years later it was made again within the context of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* —later known as IDEA—; and was debated once more in the mid-1980s as papers on the failure of pull-out services began to spread (Zigmond, 2003: 194). Almost 25 years after that debate, Zigmond gives a response that goes beyond the answers given so far. She argues that “in practical terms, the question of where students with disabilities should be educated is misguided. That question is antithetical to the kind of individualized planning that is the hallmark of special education for students with disabilities” (Zigmond, 2003: 194). Why does she consider the question “antithetical”? Because the underlying idea behind the “Education For All” movement is paradoxically, against the basis of special education that demands a personalized attention centered on the abilities and disabilities that every person has. When asking *Which is the best place for students with special needs?* Dunn is considering the questions in order to determine the best place for *all* students with special needs. Whereas Zigmond, before answering this issue proposes two additional questions: *Best for whom?* and *Best for what?*. “Answering this question —*Best for whom?*— requires that we abandon the rhetoric in which we call for *all* students to do this, or *all* students to learn that, or *all* students be educated in a certain place” (Zigmond, 2003: 196). Moreover, the question *Best for what?* leads to

consider that the answer concerning the "best place" depends on the specific educational objective that is being pursued: social, academic, behavioral, etc. This idea suggests that mainstream schools are not necessarily the most appropriate social structures to meet each student's needs. Fuchs and Fuchs, (1995) wonder if special education as proposed in the fourth stage (as inclusion) might end up identifying with general education. They conclude saying *no*. We agree with this conclusion since the bare meaning of education is the student's growth in all aspects in order to reach self-development (Polo, 2006) therefore, whether we speak of special or regular (mainstream) education, both must always be personalized, never general -"to all -.

3. What logic underlies the concept of disability?

Considering that special education and disability can be viewed from alternative perspectives and, most important, that each perspective has different implications for students with special needs as well as for their parents and families, disability should be studied from diverse perspectives as well as from other disciplines besides biology and psychology. Regarding to this, it should be recognized that disability also involves a social aspect that needs to be taken into account. We suggest the relational sociology by Donati, (2011) as the most suitable theoretical approach to clarify the distinction between 'inclusion' and 'integration' and analyze the social logics underlying each term. From a relational sociological approach, the human being is considered as a relational being that relates with other and needs relationships (and thus, society) to achieve his self-development (Donati, 2009); relationships are not accidental but constitutive of human nature. This constitutive relational dimension, leads us to consider that disability cannot be seen as a condition or a "problem" that only affects who has it. Actually, it is society who creates concepts such as "disability" or "disabled person" and, depending on what is understood by each term, they can end up generating relationships that exclude, include or integrate (Donati, 2006: 69). Analyzing disability from a relational perspective leads us to use the AGIL scheme -taken from Parsons- as an observational heuristic (Parsons, 1937; Donati, 1996: 175-303). The implementation of this scheme in the special education field, highlights four dimensions that should be taken into account when designing socio-educative practices: (Adaptation) Media: the available resources for an educational action. (Goalments) Goals: intended purposes to be achieved with that action. (Integration) Standards: standards or symbolic codes that can be used to guide social and educational activities. And the fourth dimension, (Latency) Values: what is meant by disability and the values pursued.

The use of the AGIL scheme reveals that different consequences are drawn depending on what is meant by 'disability' as on the values held (L). Depending on these, the goals to be achieved (G), the resources to be set (A) and the rules to follow (I), will change. The appliance of this scheme reveals the two sociological logics that have prevailed in special education: *Inclusion/exclusion* and *difference/integration*. The term of "inclusion" makes reference to the sociological logic of inclusion/exclusion (Donati, 2002) that has characterized functionalist modern societies which are based on the lib/lab code; that is, according to Donati, (2004), the domination of the binomial State (G) - Market (A). These kinds of societies are ruled by the values of effectiveness, efficiency, productivity and capacity. These values determine the inclusion in society of those (and only those) who play useful roles in the progress and balance of the system, whereas non-productive individuals (disabled, elderly, unemployed, housewives, delinquents, etc.) are excluded, marginalized or ignored from society because they are useless to such progress and balance. Inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream structures (schools, classrooms...) emerges within these values and, therefore, as a way to keep social structures functioning. If progress and balance of social structures (schools, classrooms, communities...) is what matters (G), individual differences will be seen as obstacles and the best way to overcome them will be *equating* (A). Hence, inclusion suggests that *all* students -with or without special educational needs- are *equal* (exchangeable) and therefore, they *all* can be included in *mainstream* schools. Thus, it seeks or intends egalitarianism among students and their adaptation to set-out structures. Since the inclusion/exclusion sociological logic is incompatible with personalized education the differentiation/integration logic should be analyzed and considered (Donati, 2008). This second logic considers each person to be unique and, consequently, different from any other (different from *all*) going further, this being unique is what makes every-one equally valuable since all share the same human nature. The link between difference and equality allows considering people with disabilities as unique and diverse but at the same time, with equal rights. Thereby, what should be sought in special education is the consideration of individual differences along with their

integration in society according to their specific needs. In other words, special education should seek equity but understood as justice that is, to give everyone his due in order to reach self-development (L). The differentiation/integration social logic, far from including some and excluding others in order to ensure the balance and progress of the structures, focuses on the person so is the structure which adapts according specific needs (I). In this regard, integration judges whether persons with special needs receive the personalized education they require within ordinary schools or, if given their specific disability, they have the *right* to access other institutions, structures and social spaces that are really prepared to respond to those specific needs. Back to the three questions that have been made throughout this paper, we shall respond to them from the relational sociology point of view that is considering disability from its social (relational) aspect.

- *Which is the best place for students with special needs?* The one that best responds to the specific needs of each person (with or without disabilities): regular or special schools -either public or social-private initiative (Third Sector organizations)- and of course, family.
- *Which is the best place...To whom?* Every person is unique and diverse but at the same time, equal in dignity. This is the basis of personalized education and therefore it should also be the basis of special education; the precise answer to this question can only be given with a specific student in mind.
- *Which is the best place...To what?* The purpose of education is to stimulate and guide self-development. Therefore, special education should look up to identify the differences among students and, at the same time, the similarities in order to stimulate socialization between *all*.

4. Conclusions

The terminological shift from 'integration' to 'inclusion' in special education and the arbitrary use of one term or another has ended up distorting the real meaning of both. This semantic confusion suggests that when it was spoken of "integration", the socio-educative actions practiced actually had this goal but fell into a mere *inclusion* of individuals in the already set-out structures (ordinary schools in most cases). Meanwhile, the current "inclusive education" or "inclusive pedagogy", even referring to *inclusion* what it really pursues and practices is the integration in society. What cannot be forgotten is that the genuine special education is personalized and therefore it will sometimes require the creation and arrangement of spaces and other facilities in order to meet the specific needs of every student. We consider this semantic distinction to be extremely important because each concept refers to different sociological logics (inclusion/exclusion or differentiation/integration) that have diverse social educative implications which range from educational policies to the selection of teaching methods and resources in the classroom.

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