



ROLE OF EARLY INTERVENTIONS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The birth of a child whether disabled or non-disabled is known to produce pressure since it includes adjustments & extra responsibilities for various members of the family. Milestones develop in a sequential fashion. It is a continuous process with a predictable sequence, yet having a unique course for every child. The birth of a child with disability is an unanticipated event. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Children with established developmental disabilities are also susceptible to multiple problems. Early intervention services are a range of targeted services to help young children who have developmental delays or specific health conditions. Early Intervention is prevention of disability and developmental delays. Prevention could be at primary level, when we seek to prevent the occurrence or development of the condition or it could be secondary prevention where in we aim at reducing the impact and magnitude of disability or delay in development. Providing services early helps children catch up and increases their chances for success in school and life overall.



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Introduction

The goal is to eliminate all barriers in order to achieve learning (Lipski, 1998). Inclusion promotes quality and equity education for all, without any type of barrier or exclusion, including those who may be potentially marginalized due to disability, gender, emotional/behavioral problems, family background, ethnicity, giftedness, migrants, poverty, hearing or visual impairment, language delay, among others. (Salamanca Statement, p. 6)

The Special Education is destined to individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities as well as those with outstanding aptitudes. It treats students in an appropriate manner according to their conditions and with social equity. For children with disabilities, education will

support their inclusion into regular education through the application of methods, techniques and specific materials. For those individuals not able to be included in regular education classrooms, an educational program will be developed to respond to their individual learning needs. This will include the development of independent living and social skills supported by the use of programs and materials.

The inclusion movement is an impetus for change, not only in educational policies, but also in the role and expectations of the classroom teacher. Teachers hesitate to accept responsibility for students with special needs in regular education. They generally do not have positive attitudes towards inclusive education, citing a lack of personal knowledge and skill for teaching students with special needs, an area that was not sufficiently covered in their basic teacher training. Changing teacher training is an option, but it takes many years for the effects to be noticeable. Inclusion has a tremendous impact on general classroom teachers as they are increasingly faced with the challenge of meeting a wide range of student needs through inclusive practices. More than ever before, classroom teachers are required to understand a multitude of exceptionalities, manage a diverse classroom, implement differentiated instructional strategies, and make appropriate accommodations for individual needs. There is an urgent need to equip teachers to work in diverse settings, and it is evident that most post-secondary institutions offer some form of inclusion training as part of their teacher preparation program.

Fundamentals for Capacity Building in Inclusive Education

- 1. Increase Awareness and Attitudinal Change through Advocacy
- 2. Create a Future of Trained Professionals: Pre-Service Training
- 3. Build on Existing Human Resources: In-Service Training and Professional Development

When developing human resources to support an inclusive education system three areas must be considered: the attitudes of teachers and education staff, pre-service training programs to help ensure that future generations of teachers enter the profession with the skills and knowledge to work in an inclusive environment, and in-service training to improve the capacity of teachers already working in the field.

When creating teacher training programs or developing curriculum adaptations it is very important to find out about existing national educational guidelines. This allows for the creation of inclusive education modules that complement and integrate into the pre-service curriculum. This can be done by understanding the local context and considering the following questions.

- What is the current staff structure of your country's education system?
- Are there built-in supports for teachers integrating children with diverse needs in the classroom?
- Do classroom teachers in our country have the skills and training to teach children with special needs in regular classes?
- Is there a cadre of teachers who are experts in special needs education?
- Who regulates the job requirements of teachers?
- Are teachers required to teach all children regardless of their special needs?
- Do the regular pre-service teacher training curricula provide essential?
- Are training institutions willing and able to integrate inclusive education?

What are the current policies in your country to support both education staff and children with disabilities?

With this information, development practitioners, educators and policy makers can work together to decide on appropriate ways to prepare teachers to teach children with special needs. Different steps can be taken based on the local context and the situation of the national educational legislation

Issues and challenges

- Inclusion requires a large vision and specific competencies for all teachers.
- Now the teachers need to know that diversity is present in the classroom, and that they should attend to learners with a range of diverse needs.
- It is imperative to prepare teachers for inclusion in all curricular plans for pre-service teachers, also for teachers in services, with the following professional aptitudes:
 1. Researcher always searches for explanations about their educative reality, has intellectual skills to propose diverse hypothesis, solve problems, generate innovation, and face challenges in the education field.
 2. Strategic is a professional with strong self- regulation, skills for planning, guiding and assessing, not only their own intellectual resources about the learning of curricular issues but also in their performance as a teacher. Always has an attitude to learn and improve. Faces uncertainty with creativity.
 3. Resilient always moves towards the future, in spite of their difficult situations, by making healthy adjustments against adversity.
 4. The knowledge, skills and attitudes for all inclusion teachers must emphasize that the purpose of all teacher interventions is the students' learning. They also need to have high expectations for all (inclusive vision), develop inclusive

projects including diverse teaching strategies and support systems (inclusive practices) and participate in a collective work (inclusive language).

Important educational aspects that every teacher needs to be inclusive: **Equality**; promoting the same opportunities for all, **quality**; offering functional and meaningful learning and **equity**; responding to special educational needs.

The implementation process

Teachers are the key to success in inclusion. Essential components for Teacher Preparation Programmes are introduced based on the experience of training teachers.

➤ The Inclusive Teacher is a professional in education with a strong commitment to his/her community. The Teacher Preparation Programme should include subjects with high social and community content because they need to be sensitive to the needs of students and the environment; It is important to recognize the school as a point of encounter among different people, it promotes agreements among all the members of the community and meaningful relationships among the components that impact the learning of the students by removing barriers, promoting high expectations and a positive environment characterized by continuous improvement and values. The dialogue, participation and collaboration allows full awareness to all as a community and, in consequence ensures successful experiences in inclusion.

➤ The Inclusive Teacher recognizes individual differences and implements learning strategies for all. The educational intervention is oriented to diversity and promotes learning strategies for all (equality), for quite a few and for only one (equity). These are other essential aspects in the teacher Preparation Programmes. Quality, equality and equity concepts should be translated into specific actions of educative interventions.

➤ Every inclusive teacher needs to move among these three realities in his/her classroom – seeing his/herself as being like all others, also like some others and finally, in some ways unique.

➤ This idea allows co-teaching or concurrent participation. Inclusion promotes co-operation in the classroom.

➤ In inclusive education, the school and classrooms are very dynamic and have a lot of interactions and roles. The exchange and experience enrich individuality. Diverse contexts indicate diverse relationship and interactions.

➤ The collaborative work among educators, facilitates inclusion and needs to be promoted in the Teacher Preparation Programme. The author believes that inclusion is funded on a collective of teachers, a team sharing knowledge, making decisions, solving problems

together and generating actions in order to improve the school and to increase the learning for all.

➤ In consequence, the collaborative work is a source of dialogue, co-teaching and updating. Information on the process of collaborative work now follows.

➤ Nowadays learning this way is invaluable and considered as a fundamental component on inclusive education. All pre-service teachers should know and develop skills in this way because;

- The teacher learns when teaching and the students teach when they learn.
- Everyone assumes tasks of leadership because we assume as protagonists.
- Outcomes increase when we make synergy and identity is strengthened when we make joint decisions, shaping teams in the resolution of problems, allowing everyone to learn or re-learn social skills.
- The results begin when we work together because nobody will do it for us – whatever we must to do, let's do!
- The economic resources are a result of collaborative work and not a condition.
- Heterogeneity provides a great richness.
- Collaboration boosts accountability and recognition processes in all communities.

➤ All programmes for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers must be based on the interpretative and critical paradigms. Allowing encounter with others, and the collective and interpretive insight into environments and circumstances and the development of research activities are fundamental. The inclusive teacher has strong skills in action research methods.

➤ Contextual Preparation. Connecting with the educational services, allowing identification of diversity as an enriching element has three great steps outlined below. For teachers to promote inclusive education, their training should link directly with the educational services in so called contextual professional practice. This approach, in our experience, must be presented to all throughout the training process structuring with multi-directional flow between theoretical and experiences close to educational field. Three important steps are proposed:

Re-significance of own school experience of future teachers

This period of time is essential. Each future teacher should discuss his/her own experience as a student, analyze emotions and be aware of school and pedagogical theory made by teachers, allowing them to 'see' those components that were previously 'hidden' such as school's culture, school's type, teachers, uses and customs that marked the dynamic school and the

values that predominated, characterizing the experiences from other angles and points of view. It certainly requires time to work individually and collectively, interchange coincidences and differences of experiences. This time must be in the first and second semesters of teacher education programs.

Approach to various contexts of school children

This consists of visiting previously selected schools, taking part in observation activities and educational practices in three stages:

- Planning activities: after assessing the educational context, it is important to develop instruments of work; observation guides, questionnaires, interviews and to make teams to provide all aspects for implementing the planned approaches.
- Critical route implementation.
- Presentation of experiences: This is done in the classroom where all of the evidence and results are presented from the previous phase.

As a result of these activities, each student keeps a portfolio and checks research to support their actions. At all times they are accompanied by an experienced teacher. Certainly, they should include diverse environments, contexts, and educational services that characterize the educational system.

Professional practices in real environments

In the teacher's training, the student must remain for a long period of time, in a school under the tutelage of a teacher. This teacher must exert mentoring activities, to enrich their teaching experience with the knowledge of a mentor who attends and promotes inclusion activities. At this time, the Faculty holds an agreement with diverse educational centers. Partnerships with the training institutions for teachers and schools are necessary. This enriching experience also enables the development of educational research in the corresponding professional options. The last two semesters are ideal for this important step.

Cross Categorical/Multi-tiered formation

Diversity needs a global and common vision; philosophy, values, legal frame, language and shared knowledge as learning theories, special educational needs, support systems, educational intervention; strategies for large and small groups and individuality, tutoring and curricular adjustments. Inclusive education must characterize all training teacher programs, offering skills and common benchmarks for everyone regardless of education level to be entered (e.g. Primary, Secondary and High Education). This versatile training enables various teachers, regardless of their field or level of training, to collaborate and participate in the

diversity of educational contexts together. The common reference on inclusive education frameworks that must be present in all Teacher Training Programs are:

a) **Common vision:** The philosophy of inclusion, legal frameworks that enable an education for all with quality and equity, educational policy that promotes attention to diversity, the historical evolution from marginalization to inclusion and conceptions among others, are fundamental aspects in educational programs.

b) **Language and common knowledge:** Emphasize the student's possibilities and support systems, with a clear vision that all children can learn. In this way the school needs to prevent the barriers and limitations for learning that could marginalize children and young people from their potential. It also includes learning conception, individual differences, the values of solidarity, respect, and collaboration. Cognitive and affective elements framed in the conception of collectivity and community empowerment as well.

c) **Educational attention to diversity practices:** Includes strategies for large or small groups and one-on-one, mentoring, curricular adjustments, alternative support systems, diversity assessment actions, collaboration with other professionals and co-teaching, trans-disciplinary action, among others. They are essential for the development of the professional skills of attention to diversity.

Mentoring: New teachers must participate with experienced teachers at least during the first two years. This includes dialogue sessions, reviews of situations, decision-making arrangements and work plans, among others to provide the following to the new teacher: intervention (guidance), facilitation (advice), and cooperation (co-responsibility).

The new teacher needs counseling and mentoring actions to consolidate his/her skills as an inclusive teacher. Whereas educational dynamic is intense and complex, it is necessary that new teachers participate under the accompaniment and mentoring of experienced teachers to enable consolidation of an inclusive vision in those teachers. It seems that this is essential to ensure the best results in the first years of teaching work. Many education systems face the phenomenon of 'burnout' among their teachers, often causing the abandonment of the teaching task, or loss of enthusiasm and commitment. This is a terrible loss to any education system or country.

Mentoring are actions carried out by a teacher, preferably of the same school, or networks of teachers that assume this important task. It requires a lot of creativity and a clear and definite plan for the monitoring of such actions. The time should be defined by each environment, however this task should be carried out at least in the first year very closely and the second year in a more distant way.

- **Intervention** The role of the experienced teacher is directive and assumes a leadership position, where instruction is given through interpersonal behavior which provides materials and ideas to be adapted, and so dominates the transmission of information with an emphasis on the explanation and application of knowledge and skills.
- **Facilitation** The role of the experienced teacher is consulting. His/her interaction with the novice teacher provides advice and listens, encourages and clarifies. The experienced teacher provides materials designed for this purpose and promotes the discussion and review of diverse conceptions. The experienced teacher assumes a role of coordinator of decisions and is a strong observer. This model focuses on interactive work methodology and improves the quality of action processes.
- **Cooperation** A critical friend or colleague is the experienced teacher role and their relationship is interdependent and a source of mutual learning, shared responsibility, experience or convergence of perspectives. Materials and ideas are developed together. There is an awareness of reaching agreements and reaching a consensus on courses of action. Cooperative research is promoted. Both input to the improvement plan. There is shared leadership and promotion of interdependence, reciprocity, collegiality and solidarity. The best features of accompaniment and mentoring are developed under the facilitation and cooperation approach.

Conclusion

Early intervention is key in helping your child overcome any developmental delays. The field of early intervention is vibrant, generating expectations that systematic, comprehensive, experientially based interventions will alter developmental trajectories and prevent secondary complications. Early Intervention is prevention of disability and developmental delays. Prevention could be at primary level, when we seek to prevent the occurrence or development of the condition or it could be secondary prevention where in we aim at reducing the impact and magnitude of disability or delay in development. Early intervention helps a child advance in all areas of development. It is vital that a child receive early intervention as soon as possible. Early intervention is critical for the child to develop good self-esteem. Without early intervention, a child's self-image may suffer and they may become avoidant of school. Early intervention can help prevent these embarrassing moments for a child before they begin school.

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