(REVIEW ARTICLE)

Book review: Index for inclusion

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt is made to critically approach, through a bibliography review, the book Index for Inclusion by Booth & Ainscow (2011), which refers to inclusive education and the three dimensions of this approach, that is, cultures, policies and practices.

First, the concept of inclusive education is analyzed, according to which all students must have equal opportunities for learning. Usually when referring to inclusive education it is considered that it only relates to special education, but the truth is that it is a broader term that includes all vulnerable and socially excluded groups, due to their diversity. The development of inclusive cultures plays a key role in the way schools operate as all members of the educational community, with the beliefs and values they carry, have the responsibility of creating effective teaching. Then, the production of inclusive policies shows that in addition to laws, policies can also be implemented in the school or classroom, in which the educational community adapts its practices according to needs. Finally, within the practices of inclusive education, strategies are developed such as the cooperation of all members of the school that lead to the quality learning of all children. Through the study of the three dimensions, it emerges that the three dimensions interact with each other and can influence each other.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Inclusive Cultures; Policy; Practices of Inclusion

1. Introduction

In this paper, an attempt is made to critically approach, through the literature review, the book Index for Inclusion by Booth & Ainscow (2011), which refers to inclusive education and the three dimensions of this approach, that is, cultures, policies and the practices.

First, the concept of inclusive education is analyzed, according to which all students must have equal opportunities to learn. Usually when referring to inclusive education they consider it only related to special education, but the truth is that it is a broader term that includes all vulnerable and socially excluded groups, due to their diversity. In the following subsections, the three dimensions of inclusion are mentioned in more detail. The development of inclusive cultures plays a key role in the way schools operate as all members of the educational community with their beliefs and values have a responsibility to create effective teaching. Then, the production of inclusive policies shows that in addition to

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laws, policies can also be implemented in the school or classroom, in which the educational community adapts its practices according to needs. Finally, in the practices of inclusive education, strategies are developed such as the cooperation of all members of the school that lead to the quality learning of all children. Through the study of the three dimensions, it emerges that the three dimensions interact with each other and can influence each other.

1.1. The three dimensions of inclusive education

Inclusive education is about increasing the participation of all children and adults in education. Schools, it is argued, need to become more aware and accepting of the diversity of children, their experiences, skills and knowledge (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).Inclusion, therefore, does not involve only students, but also addresses parents and teachers(Sava & Angelides, 2019).The concept of inclusion encompasses the diversity of people in the broadest sense, not only people with some disabilities and those who are considered to have "special educational needs", but also all people who are vulnerable to being excluded (Dimitriadi, 2014) . Vulnerable groups relate to children of immigrants, children from poor families, girls who have had a child or are pregnant, etc. (Angelides & Chatzisotiriou, 2013).

The challenge of a modern school is the formation of a school that treats all students equally and respects their diversity (Gerosimou, 2012). Thus, children who may have some difficulties or communication and learning problems are given the opportunity for a better life (Stasinos, 2016). Therefore, inclusive education cannot be a static process, but must pervade the culture, practices and policies of each school. These three dimensions interact with each other and this is the reason why they are indispensable in the promotion of inclusion (Gerosimou, 2013). Consequently, inclusion constitutes a constant process and not just a stage which we have to conquer at some point (Angelidis & Stylianou, 2019).

1.2. Creation of inclusive cultures

The concept of a culture of inclusion is difficult to define. According to the model of Stergiovanni & Starrat (1988), the central element of a culture is the belief system, which constitutes "the deepest level of culture and is characterized by the assumptions and perceptions of people" (Gerosimou, 2012). The cultures of inclusion in schools pertain to the values and beliefs of the educational staff, but also more generally the norms, which influence the practices of teachers in their effort to have all students participate equally (Angelidis, 2019). Inclusive education is important to aim at the creation of school cultures, which form the foundation that influences the policy and practices of a school (Gerosimou, 2013). According to the Index for Inclusion (Booth &Ainscow, 2011), creating inclusive communities requires a) community building and b) establishing inclusive values. The creation of a community sets the highest achievements of all as a basis and is characterized by cooperation, security and acceptance (Gerosimou, 2012; Gerosimou, 2013).

The culture in the school can be shaped by those involved in its functions, i.e. the teachers, the principal, the parents and the students. The culture of the school seems to have a positive influence in the areas related to the efficiency and productivity of the school but also in relation to the actions of camaraderie and cooperation. Also, culture plays an important part in the effort to change and improve the school organization (Hatzipanagiotou, 2008).

Leadership, in which not only one person is involved, plays an important role in the development of inclusive education in schools (Angelidis et al., 2009). In the school, the principal is no longer considered the sole leader but leadership is shared among more people, even the students (Angelidis, 2019). Changing the culture in schools is not an easy task - a systematic effort must be made by both the leader and all those involved (Vardiabassi, 2016).

In inclusion, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and actions form the context which is appropriate for students learn. In this case it is important to create educational systems in which teachers will reinforce them and take responsibility for developing effective ways to facilitate the learning of all students. This may have implications for school organization and leadership but also for universal education policy (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

1.3. Production of inclusive policies

The term "policy" generally refers to the laws, rules and principles that guide the practices of individuals, groups and institutions in various issues such as inclusive education. Policy development and implementation is not only the responsibility of government ministries. Policies concerning inclusive education can be organized at the regional, national, state, provincial and local levels, and even at the individual level by teachers and schools (Kaplan & Lewis, 2019).

In the direction of inclusive education, the Salamanca declaration on "Principles, policy and practices in special education" was aimed, in which it is stated that inclusive education in mainstream schools is the best strategy to

eliminate discrimination (Ainscow, 1998). According to the Salamanca declaration, mainstream schools that adopt inclusion policies are more effective in addressing and eliminating prejudice and discrimination creating societies that accept and respect diversity by providing quality education and equal opportunities for all (Kagkelaris, 2018).

The inclusive approach of curriculum policies must incorporate flexibility and adaptation to the different needs of everyone, so that everyone benefits from a commonly accepted primary level of quality education. This can range from the amount of time students spend in certain subjects to giving teachers more freedom to choose their working methods and allowing more time for guided work in the classroom. Accessible and flexible curricula, textbooks and teaching materials may hold the key to creating schools for all (UNESCO, 2009).

Policies encourage the involvement of all children and teaching staff since they are part of the school. Supporting policies include activities that develop the capacity to respond to the diversity of all involved equally. The aim of inclusion is to ensure the participation of all and the development of a school as a whole (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Therefore, the policy of an inclusive school provides students with the opportunity to receive an equal and quality education (https://inclusiveschools.net/gr/wp content/uploads/sites/3/2019/12/EL_maqueta_FINAL_ALTA_3MM-SANGRE.pdf).

In order to make policy in inclusive education and to achieve the corresponding results there should be a substantial collaboration between those who create the policy and teachers, students, parents and local communities (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). Thus, inclusive policies can be effectively implemented and have a meaningful impact on students. Policies must be clear, comprehensive and relevant to the reality of the people they influence (Kaplan & Lewis, 2019; UNESCO, 2009).

1.4. Development of inclusive practices in education

Developing inclusive practices means that "lessons respond to the diversity of students, are accessible to all students, teachers plan, teach and assess their lessons collaboratively, teachers are interested in and support the participation and learning of all students, the parents and the community are used as a source of support in the classroom, etc." (Kaplan & Lewis, 2019).

In inclusive education, it is important to construct curricula with activities, addressed to all students, that connect learning with experience. Learning is important to be organized so that teaching and learning activities respond to the diversity of students in the school. Moreover, children are encouraged to be active, thoughtful, critical, and to see each other as a source of learning. Adults can work together by taking responsibility for all children's learning (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

In inclusive education, the application of differentiated teaching is based on the needs of each child, which the teacher must know well, modifying the learning process by providing equal opportunities for participation to all students (Evangelou & Moula, 2016). Another important practice is the development of collaboration networks between school teachers, in which parents and students have the opportunity to participate, leading to the improvement of the school (Angelidis, 2019). Thus, a successful practice of inclusive education is the promotion of changing the culture of the school in a cooperative direction between the teachers of the school itself and also between the teachers of other schools (Evangelou & Moula, 2016).

The development of inclusive practices must also include social learning processes. Practices are ways to overcome obstacles through social action (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Researchers introducing ways to develop inclusive practices point out that there are many barriers to the implementation of practices and factors that lead to marginalization (Georgiou, Angelidis & Kyriakou, 2009).

1.5. Combining the three dimensions of inclusion towards educational change

Changes in education constitute social phenomena, which are interpreted as the system's attempt to correct its irregular functioning and consequently the conflicts of different social groups with different interests (Athanassoula - Reppa et al., 2008). Educational change can be linked either to administrative parameters, institutionalizing regulations concerning aspects of education with presidential decrees or to occur without any institutionalization with short-range transformations, within the school unit (Dakopoulou, 2008).

Each of the three dimensions of inclusion presents an important aspect that overlaps with each other. This is seen in practices that seem to be influenced by cultures and policies. Just as values are understood by observing actions, so understanding policies depends on trying to direct practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

Cultures of inclusion drive policy decisions and slowly practice, so development is constant and coherent. Promoting change in school cultures ensures that it is embedded in the characters of adults and children that is transferred to new members of the school (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

In the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), the three dimensions of inclusion, cultures, policies and practices are represented by a triangle. At the base of the triangle are cultures highlighting their value as they can support or undermine developments in education. Therefore, cultures make up the ethos of the school and the community and may negatively or positively influence policies and practices (Gerosimou, 2012).

2. Conclusion

The principle of inclusive education is to provide all children with the opportunity for equal and quality education, but in practice this principle presents many difficulties and several changes must be made in the school community.

Educational change is not only about laws and curriculum changes, but can also occur within each classroom by teachers applying teaching practices according to the needs of the group. Teachers play a key role in implementing inclusive teaching practices. To achieve change in schools, the cultures of the educational community around issues of diversity must change. Thus, for the change of attitude, beliefs and values of teachers, their training in inclusive education is important.

As shown by the study of the three dimensions for the development of cultures, the production of policies and practices of inclusion, collaboration between members of the educational community is one of the most important factors that will lead to change and the implementation of inclusion in schools. The development of a culture of cooperation and camaraderie can lead to the improvement of school reality and educational change in general.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest.

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