

Chapter 20

Social Inclusion and Intercultural Values in a School of Education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to analyze the contextual and personal factors associated with student teachers' inclusive and intercultural values to minimize barriers to learning and participation. It also examined the role higher education played as a facilitator of social inclusion. Method. The sample was comprised of 1234 university students. Researchers applied the Guide Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2000) composed of three dimensions: Culture, Politics and Inclusive Practices. Positive elements emphasized the gender variable with highly significant scores on all dimensions. Besides, younger students with no cooperation between teachers and families didn't collaborate between teachers and family to promote inclusive attitudes. Moreover, it was noted that experience increases to more predisposition to the inclusion and recognition of barriers to learning and participation. As a conclusion, it was recognized that the principles of social inclusion may be influenced by variables such as gender, age, cultural experience and experience with people.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is an inherent quality in human beings; consequently, each person thinks, feels and acts in a specific way in their lives. That mentioned diversity is expressed naturally in educational groups according to students' capacities, needs, interests, maturing rate and socio-cultural situations, among others.

Education authorities must equalise students' opportunities regardless of their personal or social situation in order to allow them to achieve a complete development of their potentials which will let them be thoroughly part of the society. According to Pérez and Sarrate (2013), the university is an institution highly valued by students because it facilitates cultural, social and labour promotion, and since it impels inclusive education. From this point of view, the university must help in training those pre-service

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university teachers which make them able to prevent and give answers to students' needs. This approach is related to teacher professionalism, motivation and continuous training, whereas working to promote inclusion in education is arranged as a way to answer to school diversity.

How teachers approach their educational work towards their students responds to the concept *barriers for the inclusion* was first developed by Booth and Ainscow (2000). This concept emphasises a contextual or social perspective on learning difficulties or disability, placing them between students and their context interaction: social and economic situations, educational policy and culture among schools.

The shortage of teachers who are qualified in inclusiveness complicates the quality of the education students receive, regardless of its type: religious or linguistic diversity, lack of culture or related to gender, different abilities, or use of various cognitive types (Alegre, 2006). The limited attention to student attitudes and especially to student diversity is part of the problem of an inclusive and intercultural education (Lalueza & Crespo, 2012).

In this sense, the authors' aim was to know the attitudes towards inclusiveness and interculturality of students of the Degrees in Preschool Education, Primary Education and Pedagogy at the School of Education of La Laguna, since they were going to be teachers and/or career advisers, and they could improve inclusive culture and integrative practice at school (Booth & Ainscow, 2000). Likewise, the fact of having carried out the study about future professionals in education allows authors to investigate the role of personal attitudes in the teacher training process, and to see if these attitudes will be modified during his or her university progress, affecting their school students (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013).

The study has taking place with primary and secondary school children (Darretxe, Goikoetxea, & Fernández, 2013; Furuta & Alwis, 2013; Roselló, 2010) and with university student teachers (Chireshe, 2011; Lambe, 2007; Sánchez, 2011). This work has been held on the Canary Islands, in particular on Tenerife, because it is a very important area placed between three different continents (Wedell, 2005, 2008), maximising changes in order to make inclusive attitudes more effective (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Future teachers' attitude in any part of the world is seen as an essential concept for a better educational practice and policy, which progress to inclusiveness and respect towards the existing diversity (Delgado, 2003; Rajovic & Jovanovic, 2013). To manage this success will depend on the positive attitudes professionals in education have related to inclusiveness of any special educational needs (Doménech, Esbrí, González, & Miret, 2003).

In order to find a solution to these problems, it is necessary to change not only teacher training programs (Costello & Boyle, 2013), but also to analyse factors that might impact upon teacher approval of the inclusive principle and use of different and appropriate methodologies to make everyone feel included (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

The above-mentioned needs are not new, as inclusiveness has been consolidated in the philosophical basis used by Warnock's inform (1978), in the role of incorporating families in the education of children (Esquivel, 1995), and in current approaches of the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2000), as positive mindsets to take.

Through these approaches and thanks to the combination of tools and resources used in the process of inclusiveness development at school, the interest is focused on how professionals in education mature and develop their own attitudes towards students, in order to help those students to build significant

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