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1

Towards inclusive education: different approaches in a historical perspective and their influence on current practices in education

Regional seminar on teacher training for inclusive education in countries with diverse social and cultural contexts

Prof. Dr. Priska Sieber,
Institute for International Cooperation in Education, IZB
of the University of Teacher Education
Central Switzerland, PHZ
www.izb-e.phz.ch

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2

Overview

- Objectives and point of view
- Different approaches over time
 - Differences as problem
 - Differences as challenge
 - Differences as resource
 - Differences as right
- Challenges to diversity education
- Competences of teachers
- Summary
- Discussion and reflection

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3

Objectives and point of view

Looking back into history, getting aware of

- how societies and education systems/schools have been shaped
- what rules and regulation, beliefs, norms, values and power relations are prevailing
- how they influence current reforms needed (diversity education)

Point of view: „... the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize.“ (Giddens, 1984, p. 25)

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4

Point of view

Keep in mind: presented approaches are much simplified (overlaps, asynchrony, ignoring specific cultural settings)

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5

2. Different approaches over time

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6

Approach 1: Differences as problem

Prevailing in 1950/60

- Difference is “otherness” is “strangeness” is abnormal – differences are denied, ignored, perceived as problem and disturbance
- Politics on differences are conferred upon schools
- No adaptation of education
- Result: discrimination and exclusion

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Approach 2: Differences as challenge

Prevailing in 1970/80

- Differences need to be "treated"
- "Otherness" should be integrated (assimilation)
- Compensatory measures are offered to pupils that are "different" (such as special classes and special offers e.g. for language acquisition)

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Approach 2: Compensatory measures

Offer of special classes and special schools in Switzerland (1980-2006)

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Separation of students that do not fit into the norms of regular classes

Index-based student population in special and regular classes in Switzerland, 1980-1997

Source: Kronig, Haebelin, Eichart, 2000, p. 13

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Results of establishing (excluding) compensatory measures

Segregating structures that enhance

- exclusion
- self-referentiality of new domains
- monoculturalism of mainstream classes

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Approach 3: Differences as resource

Prevailing in 1980/90

- "Otherness" is perceived as complementary, as resource that helps the majority population in acquiring competences for an increasingly diverse/multicultural society
- Intercultural/multicultural education
- Integration of "special" pupils in regular classes to enhance mutual social learning

Or: Culture as resource for creating identity

- Own schools for minorities such as for pupils with other language, culture, religion

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Approach 3: Challenges to intercultural education and integration

- Only a minority of well educated, mobile people feel a need for acquiring competences for an increasingly diverse/multicultural society
- Intercultural/multicultural education is demanding – it is easier for teachers to practice the well known assimilative approaches and make use of existing separate offers
- Intercultural education is mostly seen as only relevant for minorities (past paradigm)
- Taking position for minorities is generally not attractive, does not bring much recognition

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Approach 4: Differences as right

Prevailing in 1990/2000




- Individual/cultural differences are acknowledged as claim and human right
- Historically evolved comprehension of “normality” are discussed and questioned
- Search for new integrative and inclusive settings

Prevailing in 2000/currently

- Contradiction of prevailing economic models and inclusive concepts
- Need for solidarity, redistribution (duty bearers)
- Intersectionality and reflection

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3. Challenges to diversity education

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Challenges to diversity education

- Semantic fuzziness: different differences
- Diversity theory: essentialist position vs. social constructivism and existing power relations
- Concepts of pluralism: contradiction to social reality
- Transformation into professional competences of teachers: orientation of school education on conceptions of development (personal, social, cognitive, ...)
- Need for making differences: individual perception is structured along social categories

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4. Competences of teachers

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Competences of teachers

Areas of learning (defined by COHEP, 2007)

- Knowledge and reflection of social construction of differences and power relations in society and schools
- Knowledge about migration and its consequences
- Methodical competences to create learning environments for students with different experiences, resources and competences
- Skills for successful intercultural communication
- Methodical competences to promote social competences of students

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Educating teachers

Creating an environment that fosters diversity education

- Cooperation of all stakeholders in education: decision makers, administration, teacher education, schools, associations, ... (Teachers are only a small piece in the system of social exclusion and inclusion)
- Educate teachers/personnel for integrative settings
- Coordinated conception of teacher education: pre-service and in-service training, integrated into all subjects, theory-practice, quality assurance ...
- Continuous education of teacher educators
- Internationalisation of teacher education institutes

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5. Summary

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Historical perspective on diversity education

Result of past approaches to social and cultural diversity in education

- Differentiated, often segregated education systems put barriers to inclusion
- Discourse about integration/inclusion gets increasing support, but is often incompatible with individual aspirations (increasing individualistic societies) and social realities
- Acknowledgment of the right to cultural diversity questions the integration function of schools

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Lessons learned for current approaches and teacher education

Introducing/implementing diversity education

- Reforms of education, e.g. introducing diversity education, need powerful actors and much time
- Teachers (and their competences) are important, but they need support
- Teachers need not only to know how to create individualised learning environments. Reflection of own “normalities”, on how their (often monocultural) expectations are shaped are most important
- Teacher education needs to become more comprehensive, oriented towards reflecting practice, ensuring a diversity approach itself



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Thank you for your attention!

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Discussion

General comments and questions.
Looking at the education system in your country:

- What existing school structures (special schools, special classes, segregated offered measures) do hinder diversity education?
- What interest groups are arguing against inclusion? With what arguments?
- Are there interest groups that promote diversity education? How powerful are they?
- How far is standardisation prevailing? Does it include diversity indicators?

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