Transforming to Teach in an Inclusive Paradigm

Philippe Garnier

HAL Id: hal-03785237
https://inshea.hal.science/hal-03785237

Submitted on 23 Sep 2022

Philippe Garnier
France

The New Educational Review

Transforming to Teach
in an Inclusive Paradigm

Abstract

Since the Declaration of Salamanca and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we have moved to an inclusive paradigm with regard to school. Mainstream schooling has become the rule. Thus, teachers in regular classes must work with all students, including those with special educational needs. It is not easy; many teachers face dilemmas in accommodating all types of students in the same classroom. This conceptual paper proposes a framework based on Mezirow's transformative learning for understanding the transformations in teacher pedagogy needed to work in an inclusive school. It can be used as a basis for developing training mechanisms to support teachers in their transformation to work in an inclusive school.

Keywords: *inclusive education, paradigm, perspectives of meaning, teaching*

The Inclusive School Paradigm

The Salamanca Statement was ratified by 92 countries in 1994. This declaration marks a turning point with policies promoting inclusive education that gives the best possible education to all students, including those with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994). According to General Comment 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016), inclusion requires reforming school systems, which involves changes regarding content, teaching methods, and strategies in education to overcome barriers. Inclusion is certainly a theoretical concept and

requires a pragmatic effort to implement a school's political ideal for all. It requires a paradigm shift in both special education and general education (Tetler, 2015), which impacts the work of teachers. Teachers must recognise that part of their job is to respond to the diversity of all students in their classroom, including those with special educational needs (Rose & Howley, 2007). Also, they must have the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive education that meets the needs of all students, with and without disabilities (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Dally et al., 2019).

Yet, the dominant special education paradigm resists inclusion paradigms (Ballard, 2018). Authors then call for a paradigm shift in teacher education by ensuring that inclusive education theory is strongly linked to teacher practice (Forlin, 2010).

Teachers and the Inclusive School

Many teachers believe that including students with special educational needs, including those with disabilities, is, in principle, possible (Mitchell, 2015). However, teachers need to develop and receive adequate support in and out of the classroom to successfully conduct inclusive pedagogy. It could lead these teachers to have positive attitudes toward inclusion (Tiwari et al., 2015). Romi and Leyser (1996) showed that teachers' positive attitudes toward including students with special educational needs depend on many parameters. From the outset, pre-service training is essential to building teachers' skills and enabling them to positively affect school inclusion (Lambe & Bones, 2006). On the other hand, when teachers have not had training regarding inclusive education, it is difficult for them to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Coombs-Richardson, & Mead, 2011). Some teachers believe that these students will negatively influence other students in the classroom (Lopes et al., 2004). Many regular classroom teachers feel that they do not have enough skills to teach students with disabilities and that it is up to the special education teachers to do so (Tiwari et al., 2015). Teachers with a sense of low self-efficacy use inadequate teaching strategies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Yet, research shows that many teachers have not been adequately trained on student diversity (Florian & Becirevic, 2011), which is very problematic. Teachers would feel ready to work in a school with inclusive education if given appropriate support and training (Garner, 1996; Rose, 2001). Moreover, links exist between taking courses regarding inclusive education and positive attitudes toward inclusion (Boyle et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that many pre-service teachers hold negative or neutral beliefs about inclusive education (Civitillo et al., 2016; Costello & Boyle, 2013).

Beginning teachers often lack knowledge of strategies regarding students with special educational needs and thus need professional coaching to improve their teaching skills and practices (Loreman, 2014; Pearce et al., 2010; Sharma & Sokal, 2015).

Research has shown that teachers' perceptions of school inclusion vary by type of disability (de Boer et al., 2011; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Wood et al., 2014). Teachers find managing challenging behaviours one of the most difficult aspects of school inclusion (Eckstein et al., 2016; Leidig & Pössinger, 2017). Yet, studies of students with special educational needs show that they exhibit more challenging behaviours than other students (Mand, 2007). While teachers' attitudes may or may not support the inclusion of students with disabilities (Lifshitz et al., 2004), these attitudes depend on the severity of the disability (De Boer et al., 2011).

As attitudes towards students with special educational needs can affect the educational situation, regardless of the supports put in place (Norwich, 2012), it is important to help teachers implement an inclusive education to allow for the social well-being of all students. Also, according to some authors, any negative teacher attitudes should be addressed in training to combat them (Sharma et al., 2016). However, as we have seen previously, teachers are not closed a priori to implementing an inclusive pedagogy. However, they face many dilemmas in practice (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). So, what are these dilemmas?

Dilemmas and Inclusive Education

For Wanlin (2011), dilemmas are, in education, cognitive or affective situations encountered by the teacher in which contradictory elements are put in tension. For other authors, teachers are also faced with ethical dilemmas. For example, should they promote equality or positive discrimination (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2009)? Should we have a common or differentiated curriculum? (Judge, 1981)

A. Berlak and H. Berlak (1981) highlight various dilemmas encountered in education that are very much in line with the issues of teaching students with special educational needs, such as whether it is more relevant to teach all students in the same way or to differentiate according to students' specificities.

Studies of teachers' perceptions of inclusion (Croll & Moses, 2000; Norwich, 1993) show ambivalence and dilemmas about inclusion. Research findings show that teachers support the idea of inclusion as an ideal, but when it comes to considering inclusion at the level of practice, the view is different and much more reserved. In learning disabilities, Ho (2004) looks at the benefits of identifying or

not identifying a young person with a learning disability and the consequences of doing so. For other researchers conducting studies of beginning teachers (Talanquer et al., 2007), dilemmas are related to teachers' beliefs and examining them can help raise awareness, reinforce or change these beliefs.

The Conceptual Framework of Transformative Learning

To teach in an inclusive paradigm, teachers need to shift their paradigm from one in which special education is responsible for students with disabilities. Therefore, for these teachers, it is not just a matter of learning new knowledge but of profound transformation.

The conceptual framework I propose to address as a basis for training teachers who must work in an inclusive school is Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning framework. In this framework, dilemmas play an important role in training when a new paradigm is to be adopted.

Mezirow's transformative learning is a process of evolving the meaning attributed to one's experience. Our expectations about the world related to our culture and upbringing can be changed through transformative learning. According to Mezirow, perspectives of meaning are filters that organise our perceptions and concepts, limiting and distorting our ways of perceiving, understanding, feeling, and learning. This concept can be related to the concept of paradigm. Both describe something buried, something hidden that is the basis of a worldview. According to Mezirow, the paradigm is like a perspective of meaning with a theoretical basis that is related and collectively maintained (2000). Thus, one can consider the perspective of meaning as a personal paradigm, a self-paradigm, which would be, for an individual, the result of the determinations of several paradigms. And vice versa, a paradigm in the sense of Morin (1995) would be born from agglomerations of individual perspectives of meaning.

As far as the inclusive school is concerned, we can see that the link between perspectives of meaning and paradigm is important because one of the challenges of the schooling of disabled pupils is to move towards an inclusive paradigm. Now, the possible transformation of the perspectives of meaning, for example, in a training framework, gives the possibility of moving to the inclusion paradigm.

Transforming Perspectives of Meaning to Fit Within the Inclusive School Paradigm

The conceptual framework of formative learning has not yet been used in the context of teachers and inclusive schooling, and I will now show its appropriateness.

For Mezirow, the transformation of meaning perspectives can be subdivided into ten phases (2000). I take up these ten phases and relate them to the transformation that must take place for a teacher working in an inclusive school.

1) A disruptive dilemma.

The teacher has a student (or students) in his or her class who is far below the academic level of the others. What to do? The teacher encounters dilemmas. Should he teach him the same content as the others, knowing that he will have great difficulty? On the other hand, should he systematically give him content corresponding to his level and therefore independent of the content given to the other students in the class? But then, is there not a risk of widening the gap with the rest of the class and that he will be discriminated against?

2) An examination of conscience accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame

Faced with these dilemmas, the teacher may be at a loss and not know what to do. He does not feel up to the situation. Without support, he may feel that he does not have the means to implement an inclusive pedagogy.

3) Critical evaluation of epistemic, socio-cultural or psychological presumptions

Therefore, it seems essential to have support in order to try to question oneself while maintaining a certain calm. This stage can be helped by a trainer or a resource teacher who will accompany the teacher. A teacher's presumption could be: I am doing the planned programme, without any particular adaptation for this class to all the students, whoever they are. The teacher's coach can help the teacher become aware of the different assumptions and see with him what problems these assumptions may cause for certain students.

4) Recognition that the dissatisfaction experienced and the transformation process are shared and that others have negotiated an identical change

It may be interesting here to bring several teachers together, for example, in the context of an analysis of practice, to share the doubts and trials of each. In the group of teachers participating in the training, some may be ahead in the

transformation process, and they can tell their story of this transformation. How did they move from trying dilemmas to change that allows for classrooms in an inclusive school?

5) Exploring the possibilities of new roles, relationships, and ways of acting

The teacher stuck in a dilemma has heard the stories of teachers who have transformed themselves to work in an inclusive school. He can then draw inspiration from them to reconsider his teaching posture and new ways of acting to promote inclusion.

6) Developing a course of action

Based on the stories that have inspired him, the teacher begins to construct his own identity as an inclusive teacher. He sets goals for himself, even if he does not yet have the means or strategies to achieve them.

7) cquiring the knowledge and skills needed to implement his projects

To implement the new ideas in mind, he needs training and support to know what to do concretely. Examples of practices, particularly those validated by research, can give him the means and tools to carry out an inclusive pedagogy.

8) Provisional trials and new roles

It is the time to implement new strategies in the classroom to ensure that no student is left out, whatever their special educational needs. Equipped with new teaching strategies seen in training, he tries to put them into practice, analysing what happens.

9) Building the competence and confidence to take on new roles and relationships

The scientific literature indicates that self-confidence is an essential element in assuming the role of an inclusive teacher and proposing appropriate teaching strategies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Here, the teacher can still be accompanied in the field by a trainer or an experienced professional who will give him or her the necessary confidence to assume the new professional posture of the inclusive teacher.

10) Reclaiming one's own life based on the conditions imposed by one's new perspective is a new conception of the profession that the teacher has gradually built. To change professionally for an inclusive paradigm is to change one's own perspectives of meaning and way of considering one's profession as a teacher.

Conclusion

Since the Salamanca declaration, reinforced by the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, we are in the inclusive school paradigm. If teachers agree in principle with the spirit of the inclusive school, many dilemmas are encountered.

I have proposed Mezirow's conceptualisation of transformations of meaning perspectives from dilemmas as a possible framework for training devices to enable teachers to overcome their dilemmas to truly become inclusive teachers.

This Mezirow-based model can lead to a variety of training arrangements. A training that alternates moments of gathering in a training centre to exchange between teachers, moments of observation of the pedagogical practice by an experienced teacher or a trainer, followed by an exchange seems to be an adapted strategy to put the teacher's professional development in the process of transformation.

It would be interesting to have empirical studies on training that take the theoretical model developed in this article as a support to see to what extent teachers manage to transform themselves and feel ready to work in an inclusive school. If the model is designed for teachers with some experience, it would be useful to see how it can, with some adjustments, support initial teacher training.

References

Ballard, K. (2018). Inclusion, paradigms, power and participation. In C. Clark, A. Dyson, & A. Millward (Eds.), *Towards inclusive schools*? (pp. 1–14). Routledge.

Berlak, A., & Berlak, H. (1981). *Dilemmas of schooling: teaching and social change*. Methuen.

Boyle C., Topping, K., & Jindal-Snape, D. (2013). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in high schools. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 19*(5), 527–542. DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2013.827361

Carter, M., Stephenson, J., Clark, T., Costley, D., Martin, J., Williams, K., Browne, et al. (2014). Perspectives on regular and support class placement and factors that contribute to success of inclusion for children with ASD. *Journal of International Special Needs Education, 17*(2), 60–69. https://doi.org/10.9782/2159-4341-17.2.60

Civitillo, S., De Moor, J. M., & Vervloed, M. P. (2016). Pre-service teachers' beliefs about inclusive education in the Netherlands: An exploratory study. *Support for Learning*, *31*(2), 104–121. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9604.12119

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). *General comment no. 4: Right to inclusive education CRPD/C/GC/4*.

Coombs-Richardson, R., & Mead, J. (2011). Supporting general educators' inclusive

practices. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*(4), 383–390. https://doi.org/10.1177/088840640102400412

Costello, S., & Boyle, C. (2013). Pre-service secondary teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 38*(4), 129–143. DOI: 10.14221/ajte.2013v38n4.8

Croll, P., & Moses, D. (2000). Ideologies and utopias: Education professionals' views of inclusion. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *15*(1), 1–12.

Dally, K. A., Ralston, M. M., Strnadová, I., Dempsey, I., Chambers, D., Foggett, J., & Duncan, J. (2019). Current issues and future directions in Australian special and inclusive education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 44*(8), 57–73. https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2019v44n8.4

De Boer, A., Pijl, S. J., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary schoolteachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: A review of the literature. *International journal of inclusive education, 15*(3), 331–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/088562500361664

Eckstein, B., Grob, U., & Reusser, K. (2016). Unterrichtliche Devianz und subjektives Störungsempfinden. Entwicklung eines Instrumentariums zur Erfassung von Unterrichtsstörungen [Instructional deviance and subjective perceptions of disruption. Development of a set of instruments for the assessment of classroom deviance]. *Empirische Peadagogik, 30*(1), 113–129.

Florian, L., & Becirevic, M. (2011). Challenges for teachers' professional learning for inclusive education in Central and Eastern Europe and the common wealth of independent states. *Prospects, 41*, 371–384.

Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British educational research journal*, *37*(5), 813–828. DOI: 10.1007/s11125-011-9208-4

Forlin, C. (Ed.). (2010). *Teacher education for inclusion*. Routledge.

Garner, P. (1996). Students' views on special educational needs courses in initial teacher education. *British Journal of Special Education, 23*(4), 176–179. DOI: 10.1111 /j.1467-8578.1996.tb00972.x

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: a construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(4), 569–82. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.76.4.569

Ho, A. (2004). To be labelled or not to be labelled: that is the question. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *32*, 86–92. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-3156.2004.00284.x

Judge, H. (1981). Dilemmas in education. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *22*, 11–116. DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.1981.tb00537.x

Lambe, J., & Bones, R. (2006). Student teachers' attitudes to inclusion: implications for initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10*(6), 511–527. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500173225

Leidig, T., & Pössinger, M. (Eds.) (2017). Classroom Management – Eine zentrale Gelingensbedingung für Lernen und Lehren in der Inklusion [Classroom Management – A Central Condition for Success in Learning and Teaching in Inclusion]. In M. DziakMahler, T. Hennemann, S. Jaster, T. Leidig, & J. Springob (Eds), *Fachdidaktik inklusiv II. (Fach-) Unterricht inklusiv gestalten – Theoretische Annä und praktische Umsetzungen*

[Subject didactics inclusive II: Designing (subject) lessons inclusive – theoretical approaches and practical implementations] (pp. 43–62). Waxmann.

Lifshitz, H., Glaubman, R., & Issawi, R. (2004). Attitudes towards inclusion: The case of Israeli and Palestinian regular and special education teachers. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 19*(2), 171–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250410001678478

Lopes, J. A., Monteiro, I., Sil, V., Rutherford, R. B., & Quinn, M. M. (2004). Teachers' perceptions about teaching problem students in regular classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children, 27*, 394–419.

Loreman, T. (2014). Measuring inclusive education outcomes in Alberta, Canada. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(5), 459–483. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.788223

MacFarlane, K., & Woolfson, L. M. (2013). Teacher attitudes and behavior toward the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties in mainstream schools: An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 29*, 46–52. DOI: 10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.006

Mand, J. (2007). Social position of special needs pupils in the classroom: a comparison between German special schools for pupils with learning difficulties and integrated primary school classes. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 22*, 7–14. https://doi. org/10.1080/08856250601082182

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress.* Jossey-Bass.

Mitchell, D. (2015). *Education that fits: Review of international trends in the education of students with special educational needs*. University of Canterbury.

Morin, E. (1995). *La méthode 4, les idées [Method 4, ideas]*. Seuil.

Norwich, B. (1993). Ideological dilemmas in special needs education: practitioners views. *Oxford Review of Education, 19*(4), 527–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498930190408

Norwich, B. (2012). How inclusion policy works in the UK (England): Successes and issues. In C. Boyle, & K. Topping (Eds.), *What works in inclusion?* (pp. 53–65). McGraw-Hill Education.

Pearce, M., Gray, J., & Campbell-Evans, G. (2010). Challenges of the secondary school context for inclusive teaching. *Issues in Educational Research, 20*(3), 294–313.

Romi, S., & Leyser, Y. (2006). Exploring inclusion pre service training needs: A study of variables associated with attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 21*(1), 85–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250500491880

Rose, R. (2001). Primary school teacher perceptions of the conditions required to include pupils with special educational needs. *Educational Review, 53*(2), 147–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910120055570

Rose, R., & Howley, M. (2007). *The practical guide to special education needs in ınclusive primary classrooms*. Paul Chapman Publishing.

Shapira-Lishchinsky, O. (2009). Towards professionalism: ethical perspectives of Israeli teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 32*(4), 473–487. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760903257770

Sharma, U., & Sokal, L. (2015). The impact of a teacher education course on pre-service teachers' beliefs about inclusion: An international comparison. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 15*(4), 276–284. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12043

Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Macanawai, S. (2016). Factors contributing to the implementation of inclusive education in Pacific Island countries. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–16. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1081636

Talanquer, V., Tomanek, D., & Novodvorsky, I. (2007). Revealing student teachers' thinking through dilemma analysis. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, *18*(3), 399–421. DOI:10.1007/s10972-007-9047-6

Tetler, S. (2015). Inklusion – som teoretisk begreb og pragmatisk bestræbelse [Inclusion – as a theoretical concept and pragmatic endeavour]. In K. B. Petersen (Ed.), *Perspektiver på inklusion. Cursiv nr 17 [Perspectives on inclusion. Cursive No 17]*. DPU Aarhus Universitet.

Tiwari, A., Das, A., & Sharma, M. (2012). Inclusive education a "rhetoric" or "reality"? Teachers' perspectives and beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 52,* 128–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.09.002

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education. World Conference on Special Needs Education; Access and Quality*. UNESCO.

Wanlin, P. (2011). *Elèves forts ou faibles: qui donne le tempo? Une analyse de la place des élèves dans les processus de pensée des enseignants [Strong or weak students: who sets the tempo? An analysis of the place of students in teachers' thought processes]* (Doctoral Dissertation). http://bictel.ulg.ac.be/ETD-db/collection/available/ULgetd-01142011-111601/unrestricted/PhDPhWINTERNET.pdf

Wood, P., Evans, D., & Spandagou, I. (2014). Attitudes of principals towards students with disruptive behaviour: An Australian perspective. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 38*, 14–33. DOI: 10.1017/jse.2014.5