

Proiect Scolii conectate la comunitate

Indexul incluziunii modalitate de aplicare și rezultate în cadrul Școlii Horea Cluj-Napoca Material realizat de Roxana Cziker

Aim

The goal in conducting this qualitative research was twofold. Firstly, it was identify and outline the principle of inclusion and practices that underpin inclusive education in the mainstream school in Cluj-Napoca for children from primary and secondary education, gymnasium. Secondly, it aimed to produce an inclusive school development plan for creating framework for inclusive education for all students.

The role of implementation the Index of inclusion into the mainstream school was to remove the focus of professionals and staff from “children with special educational needs” to the “barriers in the way of education and participation” – to create a welcome educational environment for all.

Methods and target group

It should be noted that in constructing this qualitative research, the team used the Index of inclusion developed by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow in order to emphasize the interconnection among all three inclusive dimensions: *creating inclusive culture, producing inclusive policies and evolving inclusive practice.*

Settings

The school was selected because is one of the model school were since 2006 there were made efforts to implements the inclusion principles. The Horea School in Cluj-Napoca addresses a range of complex social, community and disability issues. Students attend the school from 6 to 14-15 years of age.

Participants

The Horea school principal and teaching staff were including into the research in order to reveal the actual inclusive parameters and to propose an action plan to improve the inclusive process at the institutional level.

The Index of inclusion was applied both, external, by a person as interview with the school’s principal and internal, as a survey for school staff. Data were collected in staff meeting which includes 20 teaching staff and the principal.

Data collection

The ongoing conversations and practices associated with the collection and review of data in the Index process can be described as action research. Action research is a cyclical process in which action alternates with critical reflection (McNiff et al, 1996).

The research was conducting in three directions: application of index within the school, qualitative analysis of three inclusive index dimensions related to the school situation and designs an action plan according with the actual school context and level of inclusion.

Survey data were collected and presented descriptively. Inclusive parameters suggested by the staff to be improved or adjusted, were included in the action plan related the development of inclusive education.

Results

Opinion of Horea School manager, position and suggestions of school's staff revealed by questionnaire and the general atmosphere of the school, were practical and valued issues for inclusion level which have been taken into considerations.

The staff positions related inclusive process was comparatively analyzed in order to emphasize common or different opinion upon the inclusion factors at the institutional level. The subjective influence of own perception has taken into consideration. The role and responsibilities of each staff in the school, the status of teachers as permanent or temporary, relation with parents, management structure and involvement at the institutional level have given the direction of own perception and subjectivism of each person.

Suggestions were made by the staff at different item of the index according with the level of implementation into the school. Then, according with the common opinion, a list of priorities for school development were analyzed and drawn up as a support for inclusive action plan.

The opinions, position, comments related the situation of inclusion in the Horea School in Cluj-Napoca have been organized by all six sections: *building community (A2)*, *establishing inclusive values (A2)*, *developing the school for all (B1)*, *organizing support for diversity (B2)*, *orchestrating learning (C1)* and *mobilizing resources (C2)*.

Dimension A – Creating inclusive culture – Building community

One of the main important dimensions which contribute to the inclusive culture is the general atmosphere created into the physical environment of the school, revealed as an external evaluation result. Thus, the school gives the impression of a welcome environment where each individual has the opportunity to find their particular place; the space, school locus and general atmosphere create a welcome space with specific element: drawings, posters and collages specifics for promotion of inclusion principle.

“The school locus, structure, organization is very welcome for everybody enters into this school, from corridors till classrooms which are well particularized according with the level of age so that each student could find his / her place.”(Principal's opinion)

There are many teachers that are familiar with the inclusive policies of the Horea School in Cluj-Napoca so that, some way, with little exceptions, they come into the institution being aware about the principle of inclusion. Even the parents and community address their children to the school according with these principles. Parents are part of the educational team as much as possible; at least they are invited to do so. Their involvement depends on their social and economical status. They are making aware about their important role of the personal and social development of their children. Parents have their own council at the class level / and **Parents' Association** which could influence as well the school decision related to the educational and developmental benefit of their own children. The parents are represented into the boarding of the school in order to take part of the school's decisions. The principal says that:

“... the both, mainstream and special school in Cluj-Napoca are informed and know that the Horea School is an welcome school for children with special needs...”

This it means that in time, the school strategy, its vision and mission were made well known at the community level in order to encourage students to attend the school no matter their needs. Institution is recognized at the community level, but it needs more visibility through leaflets, brochures in order to promote their success and results as inclusive school and motivate local authorities, parents to promote inclusion for other school as well and invest both financial and moral into those schools.

The school policy support teachers to be models for students through cooperative relationships, working in a team, respecting the institutional rules. No constraints were imposed by the teachers, but the hidden code of respect has influenced students. The rules are gently introduced to the new teachers in order to make them familiar with the role of teachers related to the individuality of student. Everybody knows that some situations arise, the management staff is ready to welcome them and to give some suggestions. In this respect, the new concept of conflict management, both student – teachers, teachers – teachers, was assimilated by both management and staff teams. The director's door is always open for good or less desired aspects.

The role of itinerant teacher was very well understood by the subject matters teachers nowadays. Six years ago, the situation was different: the cooperation between itinerant teachers and Romanian language teacher who had the impression that she is supervised by the itinerant teacher. Now almost all subject matters teachers can see the supportive role of itinerant teachers related children with different needs. The opinion of one teacher confirms the previous assumption:

“The relationships among teaching staffs and itinerant teachers are very good. For six years, the relationship between Romanian language teachers and itinerant teachers was very well consolidated...The staff team cooperation is a model for students, they being motivated to work in a team and to support the other students with special needs.”

Discrimination by differences among people is not encouraged by any of the school member. Each person's could be different and should be accepted as it is. In this respect, the partnerships between students from mainstream and special schools are developed in order to encourage the diversity. The special needs should be approached holistically and continuous in case different kind of disabled people attend the Horea School.

Dimension A – Creating inclusive culture –Establishing inclusive values

In all those years, from 2005 to nowadays, the Horea School has the opportunity to continually promote and improve the inclusive process and policies within the school so that students with special needs being encouraged to have access to diversity education. In this respect, the school has created its inclusive values which respect the others no matters the differences. This is not always the declarative fact, but it can be seen in the day by day process. The principle of diversity and difference is in general respected and assimilated at the institutional level. Thus, the students are supported and encouraged to emphasize their working potential through developing and implementing common school projects; working together means that everybody influence and determine the development of intuition, of students and environment as a whole.

One of the strongest point is that in the school a system was created where each student is motivated and encouraged to value their abilities, aptitudes, competencies, to express their opinions, strengthens points, to maximize their potential; the principle of differentiation was very well assimilated and partially implemented in practice. Students are encouraged and supported to ask for advice when they need or to express their opinion and take decisions in situation where they are directly involved.

Vision about students' performance is different. Sometimes only the highest performances levels appreciated; somehow the performances are not reported compared with the individual capacities but with the general class or even other schools level. The real potential of each individual is putting apart, “behind the door”. This is contrary principle to the inclusive process. Thus, some teachers consider that “...the students are lazy, they are not motivated to learn, not enough engaged in educational task...”

In this light, the management strategy of school implemented, in its general attitudes, the antidiscrimination attitudes. The educational methods, relationships, approaching are done according within the diversity concept. This leads to progress and tolerance. But sometimes, the concept of discrimination should be more discussed among students in order to be clearly understood and assimilated. There are social and cultural disadvantage families which could not

understand the antidiscrimination concept and the students need support from the school community to assimilate it and use it as it is. The opinion of one teaching staff emphasized this aspect:

“Using positive expressions and behaviours which lead to the motivation and encouragement of students, can be a positive situation that underline the students’ capabilities and not on their limits. We have learned how to address attention to students so that putting forward their real potential. In the frame of an encouragement environment, cooperation, support and motivation, it could be created a strong base which gives students the opportunity to follow the educational pathways in her / his own rhythm.”

The different opinion of staff concerning the student’s potential and their motivation could be routed in incomplete or wrong assimilation of the practical inclusion process and it could be a consequence of a less sustaining by the educational policy- infrastructure and human resources in terms of training and number of teachers.

In both education and social relationship, the main school’s values are implemented and respected: the human rights, diversity and individuality, equal chances, protection, children dignity.

Dimension B – Producing inclusive policies – Developing the school for all

The selection of staff according by the Romanian is not up to the school management team. A general national strategy is applied in all schools, which is not always suitable for the values, strategy, policy and specific of each school. Under this light, it is difficult to decide upon the staff employment and to match the job characteristics with the selected staff. Apart this situation, the school policy is to find the strategy to introduce all teachers into the inclusive environment of the school. In this respect, the promotion of staff abilities and competencies are equal opportunity for all. The frame was created as much as possible to encourage all staff to emphasize all creative and professional potential in the benefit of educational process of motivation and emphasizing the individuality of student and development of school inclusive strategy.

“In the school there are informing points for both teachers and parents regarding the school and community events, celebrations at the community level, aspects related to the educational aspects, news etc.”

New teachers are supported by an informal mentor in their process to adapt the teaching strategies, methods and educational materials and tools and to understand the inclusion policy of the school. They are made aware about the diversity of students within the Horea School. That is why both staffs and students have the feeling to be in a very welcome environment.

In terms of organization aspects, the school is open to welcome as many as possible students. In this respect, the educational process is structured in two shifts to cover all needs and requests.

School was created so that being accessible for all. Even students with behaviours problems, learning difficulties are encouraged and welcome within the school. The testimony of the school principal supports this assumption:

“All children in the area of the school, no matter their performances and disabilities, are encouraged to be included within the school. There are made great efforts by the school in cooperation with the direction of children protection, local council, police and families to motivate and find solutions to bring the children to the school. There are different educational alternative also for those which a certain age had not the chance to go to school. In this respect the students are referred to different programmes: low frequency school or second chance to education.”

Dimension B – Producing inclusive policies – Organizing support for diversity

At the institutional level there is a strategy to support students with different needs. In this respect, the support is addressed by different teaching staff, according with the particular needs of the most students. Support programmes for students with special needs or learning disabilities were included into the school; some itinerant teachers are employed but not enough according with the amount of needs. According by Romanian educational law, one itinerant teacher could support between 8 and 12 students with moderate and mild deficiency and between 4 and 6 with severe and profound deficiencies; the number of teachers is not decided according with the number of students with special needs, but with the limited number of itinerant teachers per district.

The inclusion strategy at the national level it is not very well developed according with the real needs. The inclusion is sustained at the local level, but it is still necessary new strategies and measures to harmonize the inclusion for all students.

“There is a clear policy at the local level, supported by the District Inspectorate of Cluj-Napoca, but there are only limited places for students with special needs related to the limited number of itinerant teachers. The needs are higher for this category of students with special needs but due to the practical, methodological and financial reasons, it is not possible to include children with special needs at the desire capacity.”

At the local level in the last 10 years, there were organized training courses for staff in the field of inclusion strategies for children with special needs. The teachers are motivated to participate at continuing training programme in order to learn new methods, strategies and technologies to support better students at the classroom. These efforts contribute to implement new tools and methods to remove the barriers related education and active participation of all students. Also, due to these programs, there were encouraged the collaborative and interdisciplinary activities in the benefit of students, between subject matters teachers and itinerant teachers. In - service training is not always adapted to the staff needs for better supporting of the process inclusion.

It is necessary to organize awareness campaigns for teachers into the mainstream schools in order to emphasize the importance of supporting the students' diversity.

The management team is preoccupied to include at the institutional level measures to decrease the exclusion criteria based on disciplinary and adjustable behavior of students. The Horea School policy is to motivate all parents and students to attend the school, even the students with behavior problems, from families with social problems and law income, families with social risk. No students are excluded from school based on behavior problems. Personal development and interpersonal relationships programs are included into the educational activities for students.

“Into the Horea School there are included programmes for self-adaptation. In this respect, the teacher responsible for the classroom or school psychologist develop in partnership counseling activities such as; self-knowledge, interpersonal communication, development of relationships with the other colleagues in order to facilitate integration and adaptation of all students.”

The verbal or physical violence are avoided by the staff in order to be a model for students as well. Measures for verbal or physical behavior are assimilated by the school to demonstrate to students that this kind of behavior is not in the benefit of community.

Dimension C – Evolving inclusive practices – Orchestrating learning

The students with special educational needs have the opportunity to follow the adapted curricula through the support of the itinerant teachers, but it is not always enough time and itinerant

teachers to support all students' needs. In the limit of infrastructure, numbers of teachers, itinerant teachers and staff, the school is opened for all students.

Teaching different subject matters is planned according with the curriculum, educational plan and in collaboration between teachers and itinerant teachers. The curriculum is adapted by itinerant teachers, according with the specific learning needs of students. The students with special educational needs or learning disabilities are evaluated by teachers at classroom in collaboration with the itinerant teachers.

"The lessons are adapted according with the students' needs, but sometimes depend on each teacher, her / his own experience, interest and the knowledge about the abilities and competencies of each student..."

Itinerant teachers are keenly involved within the supporting of students with educational needs or learning disabilities.

"The educational knowledge is adapted in collaboration between teachers at the classroom and itinerant teacher who is in charged with setting up the individualized educational plan so that the subject matter being accessible for students with special needs."

But there are situation like:

"Not all the students know how to learn and be active into the educational process being sometimes only physically present. There is could be that the teacher is not preparing to adapt the task at the student level, but only at the whole class. These lead to the educational deficit."

The different opinions are due to the fact that in general the itinerant teachers cover only the main subject such as: Romanian language and mathematics. This is the reason why some teachers meet the difficulties in teaching and make accessible to students their subjects. The situation has great impact on preparation of students for national evaluation, so that no test is adapted according with the students' needs. The only concession is an extra hour for the national evaluation test.

On the other hand, all students are encouraged to participate actively at the classroom activity and into their own education and development; the tools and strategies are gently selected so that being adapted to the teaching objectives, intellectual level of each student and sometime with the particularity of each student. Unfortunately, the actually educational programmes are not adapted so that could allow the interdisciplinary organization of lessons. This could be more done under the optional curriculum in case that parent choose the teachers' proposals and understand the role of interdisciplinary approach. This aspect underline that there is a difference between the law and the practice into the school.

Students are involved within partnerships and exchange experiences with students from other mainstream schools and special schools. They are also involved within the process of learning by learning and the main school staff aim is to emphasize the specific abilities and competencies of each student and motivate and encourage them to prove it. The class committee, composed by the all the class teachers, debate special situation of students difficulties and share solution in gaining "the recipe" of solving the problems they are confronted with.

The learning and evaluation process in students is adapted into the Horea School. Even if the accent is placed on the high level performances, the school has been trying to find its own way of evaluate students so that being possible for each of them to express their abilities and competencies which will be transferred into the concrete life situations. Subject matters such as mathematics could be barriers for students with learning disabilities, but itinerant teachers could find methods to introduce those students in the basic knowledge of mathematics which also would then be useful for the real life situations. The student's results are not compared with other students, but with her / his own results in order to motivate the students to progress. It is more promoted the cooperation

among students through common projects where each student has his/her own responsibilities and tasks.

“The evaluation of students is possible through common project achieved by students at the classroom, where the individual contribution is appreciated; the contribution of each individual to the achievement of the common project is evaluated and underlined.”

The opinions of staff about evaluation of students are sometimes different and contradictory.

“Sometimes the evaluation of students does not reflect the transfer of theoretical information into the practical area which makes the educational process more mechanical. In this respect students consider that evaluation is a way of controlling more than a way of achieving a goal and making progress in their personal development. The most advantaged are students with special educational needs because they benefit of the teaching support of itinerant teachers.”

These opinions reflect the assumption mentioned above related to the limited number of itinerant teacher/students with special need in mainstream schools. The number of itinerant teacher is normed by the human resources policy of the Ministry of Education.

Dimension C – Evolving inclusive practices – Mobilizing resources

The staff experience is maximizing both the educational and extracurricular activities in order to meet the objectives of institutional management plan.

There are personal resources and experiences of teachers and staff as a contribution to the learning support and active participation of all students into the educational process and their own development.

The institutional resources are used in the educational process – cabinets, laboratories, computers, multimedia tools etc.

Many alternatives are found by the management team in order to put forward the real potential of each child and create an educational environment for all. A more stimulation of active collaboration among students with different potential is necessary; this is a symbol and a sign of diversity, the key element of inclusive education.

The priorities revealed after the analysis of answer to Index of inclusion by the manager and the teachers, are the following:

- Establishing staff development activities to make lessons more responsive to diversity;
- Improving all aspects of access in the school for disabled children as well.
- Developing collaborative learning among students.
- Increasing the involvement of students in the decision-making process concerning their own persons and the school.
- Improving the communication between the school and parents.
- Promote more the educational activities, results at the community level in order to demonstrate the role of inclusive school for the integration of all students into the society.
- Teachers and especially new teachers need to be more prepared to understand the practical key concept of inclusion and how it works in practical educational activity.
- New programmes for parents should be implemented within the school in order to find them—self their important role in the education and development of their own children.
- The curriculum should be more flexible so that being permissive to be adapted according with each child.

1.-e-formare

Plan de actiune pe 3 domenii ale indexului

Conclusions

In general the Scoala Horea in Cluj-Napoca facilitates the inclusion of all students according with the available resources: teachers, staff, materials, infrastructure and curriculum. Both the management team and intuitional staff react as a keenly involved persons within the educational process in order to facilitate the collaboration and communication among itinerant teachers, teachers of subject maters, students and parents,

Methods, strategies and politics used in the school reflect the implementation of many inclusive practices through relationships among staff and educational strategies and methods.

The school is highly orientated versus new elements, diversity and practical use of the antidiscrimination principle and makes sustained efforts in the promotion of results and school activities at the community level.

It is still needed more support on behalf of inclusive politics at the national level, adaptation of legislation which could open new opportunities of promotion and implementation of inclusive practices and principles.

Bibliografie

McNiff, J., Lomax, P. and Whitehead, J. (1996) You and Your Action Research Project (London: Hyde).