

TEACHERS EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING: REFINEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS

Maria Teresa Eglér Mantoan

This project has been devised aiming at the consolidation and refinement of the institutional actions for human resource qualification, teachers and technicians, in order to integrate students with disability, in the regular school system and vocational training. It also means to intensify the projects of inclusive education, by putting in perspective quality teaching for all students, with and without disability.

This study has been being carried out since August/98 and has a duration of approximately 36 months; it consists of the following phases:

- a) carrying out field research to find out the difficulties and competence of the teachers in charge of the school service for students with disabilities in the regular school system;
- b) complementary studies in education and professional training through exchange programs with advanced teaching, research and development centers;
- c) comparison of the results obtained from the field research with other realities and experiences of inclusive teaching abroad;
- d) reevaluation and improvement of the actions of LEPED- *Laboratório de Estudos e Pesquisas em Ensino de Pessoas com Deficiência* - (Laboratory of Studies and Research in Teaching People with Disabilities) regarding:
 - academic education of the student-teachers and

multipliers of the projects of inclusive education:

- professional qualification of teachers from the state and municipal school system as well as other professionals from the area of rehabilitation and vocational training, seeking the inclusion of people with disability at school and at work.

How to give a new meaning to special education and professional training of people with disabilities has been the big issue for all those interested not only in redemocratizing the Elementary School System (*Ensino Fundamental*) but also in making these people's qualification suit the labor market, aiming at the educational and social inclusion.

This project is intended to contribute to finding out the answers to those and other questions. The idea is to add new data to the ones we already know and extend our investigations in order to improve the experience that we have already accumulated from previous projects of the LEPED - *Laboratório de Estudos e Pesquisas em Ensino de Pessoas com Deficiência* - (Laboratory of Studies and Research in Teaching People with Disabilities), of the Faculty of Education at UNICAMP - State University of Campinas / São Paulo, Brazil.

We have been working directly with the municipal public schools and with the private schools since 1991, by offering in-service training to the teachers and other members of the schools' technical and administrative

staff, to help them include students with disabilities in the classrooms and by developing human resources for the vocational rehabilitation. Likewise, we offer guidance to rehabilitation institutions in the community of Campinas and neighboring towns, in their projects of professional training of people with disabilities.

With this project, we also hope to consolidate what we have already developed at *UNICAMP* where we have created a complementary research and extension program which could be used as a reference to other Brazilian states and to institutions that share the same concerns and interests.

We believe that the action guidelines to be set in favor of a teaching specialized in all children, need to come from a direct consultation with the teachers, so that we can identify their difficulties, concepts, expectations, and feelings towards the students with special educational needs

We have chosen teachers from the Southeast region of Brazil as the subjects of our field research because that is the geographical area where we are located and because those are the professionals who are the closest to our working area. We are also aware that the teaching practice of the teachers from the regular Brazilian public school system has been excluding the students with special educational needs, generally grouped, indiscriminately, as having some kind of disability. As far as we can see it, the lack of knowledge and information and the innumerable prejudices displayed against students with learning difficulties, account for that inappropriate approach. It is, therefore, important to verify, in the field, what our teachers from the regular and special teaching know and think about the educational process of «different» students.

On the other hand, the disability in its several manifestations, has not been seen in the rehabilitation and professional training of people with disabilities as a temporary or permanent condition of non-efficiency, which generates several misunderstandings of concept and organization of services.

To change that situation, we think it is necessary to broaden and strengthen the specific knowledge of the teachers in both, the regular education system and in the special education, by helping them change their attitudes in order to avoid discrimination and doubts regarding the curricula learning possibilities of all the students, with or without disabilities.

In a word, our objective is to have updated researchers, students and teachers at LEPED and we also want them to continue building up knowledge to serve the interests and needs of the community. The idea is to contribute constantly and effectively to the qualification of human resources in education, and in special with regards to inclusive teaching and employment of people with disabilities, considering the innovative character of such proposals. It is, therefore, intended to offer better conditions so that the educational and professional training of people with disabilities can be well qualified and move towards respect for the differences among people.

The project is divided into two basic activities:

- . Field research
- . International exchange programs

The field research started in August 1998 and its aim is to get the necessary support so as to expand and deepen the knowledge about our educational reality and to improve the actions developed by LEPED for teachers qualification.

At the end of this phase we hope to know the difficulties and the competence that the teachers in the Southeast region of the country have in working with inclusive teaching. The international exchanges look for an exchange of experiences, information and knowledge related to inclusive education projects in countries using an advanced educational approach such as : Canada, Spain, Italy, and Chile.

We will be also looking for the comparison of realities and for new perspectives for institutional action which aims at the continuing qualification of the

teachers by the LEPED.

With the results of this last phase we hope to achieve some improvement in the professional qualification of the members of LEPED who are responsible for the teachers education in the educational and vocational training, in the perspective of inclusive education.

The procedure that has been set to monitor, assess and control the research comprises three phases, which overlap or that can occur simultaneously, that is, information collection, analysis and refinement of actions.

The field research data will be collected in meetings, debates, questionnaires, reports, evaluation sheets, and classroom video taping. These data will refer to the development of the pedagogical actions as a whole.

The global analysis of the project will involve the whole team, because it is important that the opinions and the interpretation of the data be shared and that the points of view be exchanged once they are often different.

Considering that it is a reflective process, which

values the diversity of opinions, the periodic meetings of the project's coordinators with the visiting teachers, assistants and helpers are the ones we point out as being the most efficient.

In other words, we believe that reflecting upon what we do and upon what we think about an educational issue or situation is a fundamental condition for us to implement an educational innovation such as inclusive education.

This method for analysis must be adopted at all instances of the project so that it can, indeed, become real.

The phase of the refinement of actions will come as a consequence of what is analyzed and of how much we grow in the process of understanding what we are developing in this and other kinds of planned action.

The three modalities of evaluative action imply, therefore, a democratic and open work dynamics that guarantees the project's participants an active participation in the achievement of the goals proposed in the two segments: the field research and the exchange programs.