1.1. CURRICULUM ADAPTATION

Made by: Rosana Glat, Ph.D.¹
          Eloiza da Silva Gomes de Oliveira, Ph.D.²

1.1.1. “INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: PRESENT DIAGNOSIS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES” WORKSHOP – REPORT OF THE CURRICULUM GROUP³

1.1.1.1. DISCUSSION METHOD

The workgroup that discussed Inclusive Education from a Curricular Viewpoint, during the “Inclusive Education in Brazil: Present Diagnosis and Future Challenges” workshop was made of 15 members⁴, coming from seven different states (North and Southeast regions) and the Federal District. It was a diversified but harmonious group, made up of professionals who acted in different positions: Special Education managers and technicians from state and municipal Secretaries of Education, technicians from the Ministry of Education and from an international agency, and university professors.

1.1.1.2. DISCUSSION SYNTHESIS

1.1.1.2.1. RESPECT FOR THE STUDENT’S DIVERSITY AND SINGULARITY

A curriculum that takes diversity into account should, first of all, be flexible and adaptable without loss of content. It should be designed with the general goal of “reducing attitude and concept barriers”, and characterize itself by “giving new meaning to the learning process in its relation with human development”.

It is not just a matter of small episodic modifications the teacher may come to perform, in terms of methods and contents. On the contrary, it bears mostly upon the “reorganization of the politico-pedagogical project” of each school and the school system as a whole, taking into consideration “the necessary adjustments for the inclusion and effective participation of students with special needs in all school activities”.

¹ Doctor in Psychology, Associate Professor and Head of the UERJ School of Education, specialist in the field of Special Education, member of the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Council on Education.

² Doctor in Education, Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the UERJ School of Education, specialist in the fields of learning, curriculum, and evaluation, member of the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Council on Education.

³ Coordinated by Prof. Rosanna Glat.

⁴ 22 names were referenced on the list, but only 15 effectively participated in the meetings, two of them migrating from other groups.
1.1.1.2.2. CURRICULAR ADAPTATION OR REORGANIZATION

Two types of adaptation were discussed whose need is felt for the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classes: accessibility adaptation of the curriculum (eliminating architectural and methodological barriers), and pedagogical adaptation (or curricular in their own right). On the accessibility dimension, it was stressed that “accessibility and school permanence do not assure knowledge acquisition and teaching quality”. At different points of the discussion, severe criticism was made of the relaxed way in which special classes were closed and the students “thrown” into regular teaching, without proper pedagogical preparation of the teacher or curricular adaptation. The group’s worry was that a “mere physical inclusion of the disabled student, the way it has been happening in many Brazilian school systems, results in an exclusion from school”, implying a failure, and, probably, the school dropout of that student.

How to teach the disable student together with the other students is the biggest “knot” and challenge of Inclusive Education, because that is the point where inclusion is no longer a philosophy, an ideology or a policy, becoming instead a concrete action in real-life situations, involving individuals with specific difficulties and needs. Because, at least in our country, the kind of inclusion one is aiming for will occur in the context of a deficit-ridden, and sometimes bankrupt, school (the statistics for year drops, class failure, and school dropout show that the problem does not restrict itself to the so-called students with special needs5), a teacher that was not trained to deal with diversity, and students with great learning difficulties due to real sensorial, intellectual, psychological and/or motor disabilities, not to mention socio-economic and cultural difficulties.

The difficulty with that model’s implementation, especially in the case of students with serious conduct disturbances, cognitive and/or communication deficits, was also underlined in the group discussions. As one of the members expressed himself, “we are not talking about intelligent kids who were placed in special schools because they had physical disabilities or borderline kids with simple learning problems, but rather students who are hard to teach be the best teacher in the best schools”!

Another point that was focused was the fact that none of the reported experiences had come down to the level of a school’s daily routine, the examples remaining restricted to the level of policies or showing students included in social events. The group considered that “that omission in itself is already significant data, that is, why did not any of the studies privilege the actions the teacher of a regular class has to take in order to include the student in her form of class?” It was believed that it happened, precisely, because that is where the main difficulty rests. In the words of one participant: “special education was created because we didn’t know how to teach those children together with the others, and until now we still don’t know”!

One of the consensus conclusions of the group is that “school inclusion is not the same thing as social inclusion”. The inclusive school “is the one that offers the special-needs student the acquisition of school knowledge”, together with the rest of the class. If that dimension is in the least minimized or hidden,” the student will end up learning less than in the special system, even if socially she develops and broadens her horizons.”

5 In the words of a group member, “Brazilian schools, whether they’re public or private, are not ready to handle 21st century students!”
1.1.1.2.3. REGULAR CLASS TEACHER “WARM”, TRAINED AND SUPPORTED

For school inclusion to be real, the regular class teacher has to be alerted and trained (both psychologically and intellectually) to “change her way of teaching and adapting what she is going to teach” in order to meet the needs of all students, including the ones with the most serious difficulties.

While the teacher training and qualification programs or degrees must grant effective conditions for the teacher to start working immediately with her students, “they can not be a qualification that is simply tuned to specific questions (a recipe kind of thing), and should offer instead some measure of theoretical methodological depth” (which most teachers in both regular and special education do not have) that allows her to transform into a “teacher who can reflect and give a new meaning to her pedagogical practice, in order to meet the diversity of her student body”.

It was considered a priority action the training and qualification of teachers, with an eye on the didactical curricular reorganization, “with special emphasis on the pedagogical but also affective relationships that are established in the classroom”. There was also a consensus that this is a kind of training that has to be continuous, and include exchange of experiences and external interchange (such as the present seminar, for instance), besides qualifying activities in the school itself (training on the job), in the form of study centers and case-studies, supervision, etc. It was stressed the importance of the teacher having “time to plan, analyze, and research her practice”, with a great sense of approval for the deposition of a municipality where the number of teachers per school was increased to allow the teachers that space of reflection without harming the students.

1.1.1.2.4. CONTINUOUS, INSTITUTIONAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS AND OF THE “PRODUCT” OF LEARNING

This is the last issue the group raised as indispensable for pondering the curriculum of the inclusive school. The absence of learning criteria and evaluation methods is one of the problems we inherited from the segregated model of Special Education. Everyone agreed there is a pressing need of “clearly defined indicators – starting from the school’s politico-pedagogical project and from the teacher’s planning – to monitor the student’s learning process and knowledge acquisition”.

Another issue that caught the group’s attention was the fact that none of the reported experiences even touched the topic of evaluation; it was proposed that this should be one of the thematic dimensions to be exploited and discussed in future meetings.

According to the group’s views, a school that proposes to be inclusive needs to have an “operational definition of the school evaluation process for the student with special needs under the same perspective or model, even if there’s a need for flexing certain criteria, as the one used with the remaining students”.

It was also agreed that “one can not express evaluation in terms of adjectives or demonstration of curricular situations in the fields of arts and recreation / socialization”. The “evaluation in the inclusive curriculum should be flexible, and yet objective”. The group showed a great concern about automatic or “facilitated” approval models, because “if the student with disabilities ends up just passing, without getting the necessary knowledge”, we shall be reproducing the same problems we had with special education. It was pointed out that
one of the reasons behind the search for a new educational model was precisely the failure of special education in making students with disabilities, even after years of schooling, achieve a level of schooling and knowledge that were compatible with the effort put into it. “If special education would have been successful, we probably wouldn’t be proposing a new school attendance model for these students!”

To sum things up, the group stressed the importance of developing evaluation studies and research about the inclusion experiments, from both a formal academic viewpoint, especially those performed by the school’s own teachers, presenting sources of data on the school trajectories of students with special needs in regular classes, and from a viewpoint of the whole school inclusion process. Only then we will be able to perfect our practice, leaving behind an empiric system of trial and error, and reach perhaps not a unified model for the whole of Brazil but, at least, some general guidelines for the orientation of schools which are entering the new model.

As a suggestion for future meetings, special attention was called to the continuity of publicizing for the study of inclusion experiments, such as the ones presented here, going deeper, however, on the classroom’s daily life.

### 1.1.2. REPORT OF THE INTERNET DISCUSSION GROUP ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CURRICULUM

#### 1.1.2.1. DISCUSSION METHOD

The Internet discussion on Inclusive Education, which took place in the week of April 21-25, 2003, was focused on the curricular and pedagogical dimension of the educational inclusion process. It was an enriching debate, which included the active participation of over 40 people, originating from several Brazilian states and other countries such as Portugal, Argentina, Mozambique, among others.

In order to organize the discussion development, we presented three guiding questions, which were accepted by the group, and sequentially worked upon for the length of the week:

1. Dimensions of a curriculum that contemplates Inclusive Education.
2. Daily life of Inclusive Education in the Brazilian school’s reality and daily life.
3. Institutional and learning evaluation under the inclusive school paradigm.

#### 1.1.2.2. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

We will be presenting, next, a summary of the group members’ interventions in answer to each of the proposed questions.
1.1.2.2.1. DIMENSIONS OF A CURRICULUM THAT CONTEMPLATES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1.1.2.2.1.1. CURRICULUM CONCEPT

More than just programs, content listings and activities, a curriculum is the development of ways of thinking, perceiving the world, and living. It has implications upon the individual’s preparation for the existing society, for assuming domineering or submissive positions, for taking critical or alienated positions about reality, for fully or only partially living her citizenship.

The conceptual and philosophical viewpoints of Education, which guide the curriculum, define the school’s daily life, and its consequences. In our discussion, with special concerns for diversity and inclusion, the curricular referential that was pointed out was Critical Multiculturalism, quoting several authors such as McLaren and the constructivist viewpoints – Vygotsky and Piaget – of Bruner and Perrenoud, among others.

According to that perspective, the curriculum does not work with knowledge alone, but also with culture, identity, and subjectivity. To design curricula is to take decisions on the knowledge that will be considered, valued, and transmitted by school. It is also deciding on the creation of excluded groups and cultures denied by school. The multicultural perspective forces the curriculum to compromise with quality teaching and the viewpoints of openness and respect for diversity.

1.1.2.2.1.2. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CURRICULUM

The Education professionals are not the sole responsible for the curriculum. There is fundamental knowledge that is in the specialist’s field of expertise, but there is also knowledge that comes from the community inside and outside the school, and from the students themselves, which can extraordinarily improve the curriculum. Thus, it needs to be democratic, encompassing, and inclusive, in order to meet the singularities of the student body – not just the so-called special educational needs, but the individual needs of those who cross the school environment.

1.1.2.2.1.3. THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSION STRUCTURING THE CURRICULUM

The group discussed inclusion exhaustively, stressing that it means that, when it truly exists, society understands it, and adapts to meet the needs of everyone, instead of just a single group; that it defends the rights of everyone, with the difficulties they may have; that it brings excluded groups to within the “system”, giving it a quality that is enjoyed by all; and that it starts from the realization that we are all different, valuing the peculiarities and individuality of each person. These were noted in the group itself, in the enrichment of the diversity of experiences and viewpoints.

It is important to underline that inclusion starts with family and school, where children, teenagers, and adults should enjoy the company of all, instead of the segregation in separate groups.
In the case of the curriculum, it does not mean to work for the “special” groups, since that is still excluding them, but rather to work with them in the construction of the conception of subject, knowledge, and world that the curriculum involves. We are not dealing just with the students with special educational needs, but also with those “culturally different” from the performance standard the school expects, with those that are “culturally challenged” when compared with the dominant culture.

1.1.2.1.4. CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS

In order to meet the diversity we have talked about, there is a need for “adaptations” of the regular curriculum, involving organizational modifications in the goals and contents, in the methodologies, in the didactical organization, in the temporality, and in the evaluation philosophy and strategies, making it thus possible to meet everyone’s educational needs in the creation of knowledge.

Some group members criticized the curricula developed in schools, qualifying them as “exclusive, reproductive, domesticated, and uncritical”. That reflection included the university curricula themselves, especially the ones in the educator training courses.

This week’s discussion left good leads on topics to be dealt with in more depth in the following stages. It was stressed, for instance, that any curricular adaptation needs minimal accessibility conditions, which will allow its achievement. The group also talked about the present importance of the new information and communication technologies integrated into this curricular process, pointing out the so-called “assistive technologies”, a relatively new concept in our country’s Education.

Such adaptations need, necessarily, to involve the whole institution’s team – avoiding the transfer of responsibilities – and cross three different levels: the politico-pedagogical project, the curriculum, and the individual attitude changes.

However, the concept of curricular adaptation proved itself controversial. Some group members uphold the idea that one can not create a modified curriculum for the specific cognitive development of groups of people, and that all that is needed is technical accessibility resources for those groups, which would entail not the creation of adaptations, but rather the creation of “multiple curricula”, which would be simultaneously implemented. They claim, furthermore, that there is no difference in the mental structure or in the learning mechanisms of the members of those groups. Consequently, they uphold the existence of a single curriculum, and that every student is performed the grading evaluation for the abstraction, concentration, and generalization level that student is in, for the previously built concepts, and for the motivation, as an example. From that stage on, the appropriate curricular design would start.

Another part of the group, however, claimed that the development of the single curriculum, without any adaptations that take diversity into account, can reinforce the excluding practices, now under the form of abandon and neglect of those students at “the back of the classroom”, and lead to the dangerous labels of “learning difficulties”. These colleagues argue that the fundamental thing is the creation of the “inclusive school”, the one that is so flexible that it is open to receive everyone, and also the necessary curricular adaptations for everyone’s needs to be met. They claim that the curriculum is unified, anyway, only that at the moment of implementing it, instead of a single strategy, adaptations are implemented.
1.1.2.2.1.5. **THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSION IN SCHOOL**

This was probably the group’s most heated argument. Again, we could perceive two different positions, regarding this issue. One part of the debaters is for the *total immediate inclusion*, even if it has to be “forced upon”, placing every student in regular classrooms full-time. To them, *inclusion will occur, naturally, in the daily living and daily contact*. They argue that this is an effective strategy for diminishing social inequality as a whole, adding that this tendency is not growing in our country alone, but rather in the whole world.

Another part of the group brought a different thought, going as far as to claim that the first group was defending a “Shiite inclusion”. Total inclusion, according to them, is dangerous and can increase the *worrying dropout levels*. It can even recreate, in the school’s daily life, an excluding version of the external practices, with discrimination, lack of access to knowledge, and the meritocratic and classificatory evaluation, of which we will talk later. They claim that the *inclusive procedures need to be accompanied* by a preparation, which includes reviewing the arbitrary norms of normalcy, secularly applied. They criticize the indiscriminate application of principles that, even if they are legitimate and fair, could be contaminated by discredit and despair.

1.1.2.2.2. **REFLECTIONS ON THE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE**

Even though we didn’t have a great number of reports on these experiences, the discussion on the school daily life was quite rich, revolving around two basic questions:

- “Should all students, regardless of previous conditions (theirs and the school’s), be inserted into the regular schooling system, with no great displacement between age and grade?"
- What kind of resources or support do different students, with different types of special needs (visual, hearing, and/or cognitive disabilities, behavior disturbances, multiple disabilities, over achievement) need, so that they may study in inclusive schools with academic achievement?

Regarding those questions, some items were the object of consensus. The first one was that it is not possible, nor desirable, for there to be a “manual” explaining “how to develop and implement an inclusive curriculum”. That goes against the very essence of the inclusive curriculum concept, *which has the basic feature of being flexible to allow for customization*.

Also regarding the curriculum, it was seen that in the nursery and in kinder garden, whose focus falls on activities that aim to develop psycho-mobility, and language, other than autonomy and participation, there is no need for great curricular adaptations. On the contrary, the important thing is to de-characterize the child with disabilities as a fragile being, who needs super-protection attitudes from the teacher.

In basic school, however, the situation is more complex, since most teachers, coming from a “content-based” training, believe that students with special needs, due to their compromises, have no conditions to achieve the goals set out for the rest. *Inclusion can, however, be favored, if the school’s Politico-Pedagogical Project sets a focus on programs, whether they are biased towards the development of general social skills, or towards formal academic education, in itself. In the realm of social mingling, we set as goals communication, language, individual and social learning, and potential development (through one’s interests) In the academic realm, reading and writing development, resolution of problem-situations and the understanding of calculus, care with one’s own body and the environment, and the perception of transformations in the social environment are the items that are more clearly focused. The real situations of the activities*
organized to achieve the goals allow the teacher to meditate on each achieved answer, within the interests and the pace of each child.

Alphabetization, mostly of blind people, was also one of the focuses of discussion during the week; with the participants considering it an item that still needs a larger reflection in what concerns the direct inclusion of those students in the regular class. It was stated that, in the case of blind children, there is a risk of occurring learning problems if they were to be included in a class of 40 students to be alphabetized, before they mastered Braille and Soroban.

In general, it was seen that it is not possible to determine the way in which each school will perform the necessary curricular adaptations; the teacher herself, based upon her daily experience, can achieve creative proposals that meet the individual needs of the students, without leaving her class’s daily routine.

On the role to be played by the teacher in the daily life of an inclusive class, there were different viewpoints. While some stressed their differentiated pedagogical qualification as a prerequisite to face diversity in the teaching-learning process, others stated that the teacher’s main job in a classroom is not so much to pass a specific concept, but rather to develop relationships, citizenship, and independence. Over that viewpoint, the issue was raised of the minimal academic content that needs to be accomplished in each stage of schooling, being argued that a teacher ready to deal with diversity and individuality will not have great difficulty in passing any content to her students. On the other hand, a teacher that is trained only to transmit content, without knowing how to deal with diversity and individuality, will not always be able to pass her programmatic content, even if she does not have students with special needs in her class.

In developing the daily life dynamic, it was considered to be important that classes include different alternatives for approaching the day’s subject, in such a way that the different learning “styles” and interests can be abided. The teacher should learn how to plan her classes in a diversified way, so that each student has the opportunity and the possibility to participate and, in the end, contributes to the group’s general learning. Regardless of the class’s composition, the teacher should be able to prepare and coordinate the classroom activities, imprinting upon them a dynamic that is more compatible with the social reality and less boring to the students. Besides, in an inclusive class, comparative and competitive character activities should be replaced by those that encourage cooperation between students.

It was also stressed, by several participants, that the teacher who intends to effectively act with an inclusive perspective should be a researcher of her own practice, since that is the only way she can build new educational, development, and learning paradigms. In that sense, the teacher, when starting her daily work, should always ask herself: “What can I do so that student X, who has a disability / difficulty Y can learn the programmed content just like the rest?” “Is what I am saying / showing make sense to her? Does she share the same meanings as the majority of the other students?” This simple research exercise shows how you can deal with diversity in daily life, since it removes the stress and the responsibility for learning away from the student, and focuses it on the learning procedure, benefiting the whole class, and not just the student taken to be “special”.

In that sense, the accumulated knowledge of Special Education has to be shared with the teachers and other regular school educators, every time a student with any special type of disability or specific difficulty arrives at the school. How does she learn, and what she needs to learn, are the first questions the teacher will have to figure out, before she can plan any activity for her.
It became explicit, in the discussions that took place on the topic of daily life, that if, on the one hand, there is a consensus that the curriculum and the classroom activities that stem from it have to be planned for all, on the other hand, several participants pointed that there is no denying that students with specific special needs have to be taken into account in their specificities, under the penalty of there being no learning.

In other words, some argue that the curriculum has to be the same, and the teacher should pass the knowledge and develop the activities for the class as a whole, without putting any student “on the spot”. Others, however, believe that in the daily practice very often adaptation is the only way of stimulating a student and promoting some type of learning, especially since he already carries a history of school failure. If her insertion in the regular class does not assure her some form of academic success, even it what is required of her is different from the rest, she will become more frustrated, and the school situation can become aversive.

The great problem that was pointed out, at several points in the discussion, was the excessive number of students in the regular class, since in front of a class of over 30 students, such as is common in our country, it is very complicated for the teacher to develop a diversified dynamic that assures him a balance between general curricular planning and meeting the different individual needs of the students.

Finally, the controversy between total inclusion and more specific tendering alternatives, which was already mentioned, was also brought about in the discussion on the school’s daily life. Based upon their experience, some participants claim that specialized modalities such as the resource room, for example, if properly organized and merged into the school’s pedagogical proposal, are an excellent support instrument for the teacher who has students with disabilities in her class. According to them, the existence of that kind of support in the school system gives the regular class teacher a certain pedagogical security, which allows her to handle the unknown and, then, take the challenge in a more relaxed way.

Other participants, however, reminded that the resource rooms have, over the years, had the tendency to replace teaching in the regular classroom, where the special student ends up having her “socialization” as a sole goal. In other words, the very existence of resource rooms or other meeting alternatives has effectively caused the teacher to, in a certain way, accommodate and forgo the responsibility of teaching that student together with the rest, and that was, precisely, one of the reasons for the failure of the integration model.

The counter-argument was that, with the (successful) dissemination of inclusive proposals in regular schools, the resource rooms will gradually witness the decrease of their participation in the classroom teaching exercise. At this moment, however, they are still a “safe harbour” for the teacher who does not know the special student.

Yet, in general the group agrees that to offer some specific meeting, in smaller groups, does not necessarily contradict inclusion, as long as the people always have the opportunity to learn together, in a wider group, as for example in diversified workshops.

We need, however, specific teams that hold that knowledge and which, most of all, have the vocation to be training multipliers, to offer support to those teachers and to “translate” that specific knowledge into support for the teaching activity, for creating an inclusive institutional daily life.
1.1.3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We start from the understanding that academic inclusion is not the same as social inclusion, and that accessibility and the mere presence of the special student in a regular school do not assure acquisition of knowledge and quality of teaching. Even though some participants valued the social development aspects, there is the worry that, if the academic dimension is minimized in inclusion projects, the students who trade special teaching for regular school will be handicapped in their learning and knowledge acquisition, which results in failure and school dropout.

It was quite significant that, both in the Seminar and in the online discussion, in spite of them being explicitly called for, very few reports were presented of real-life experiences where the curriculum and the class dynamics were adapted to take into account students with special needs. Thus, without data to base ourselves upon, the discussion turned instead to the conceptual theoretical side.

We had a few depositions from people with disabilities on their schooling in the regular educational system, and a few depositions from teachers and educators on the same point. Comments, observations or reflections were also made, by several participants, on the daily life and the curricular adaptations in the classroom for an inclusion process to occur, yet without reference to real situations that already occurred. That seems to be an indication that inclusive education, even though it is framed by legislation and it is considered a priority educational policy, still does not represent the daily reality of our schools.

The curriculum for an inclusive school does not refer only to the adaptations made to accommodate the students with disabilities or other special needs, rather implying a new form of curricular concept, which has to take into account the diversity of the school’s student body. Regardless of the class’ composition, the teacher should be able to prepare and coordinate the classroom activities, imprinting upon them a reality that is more compatible with the social reality and is less boring to the students.

The basic feature of an inclusive curriculum is its flexibility. A curriculum that takes diversity into account should be ready for adaptation, of both specific goals and teaching methodologies, keeping, however, a common base. In other words, the curriculum can not be so “closed” that it does not allow the new experiences that will oxygenate it, nor so fluid that it will let the educational experiences happen in a “spontaneous” way.

Under this new curricular viewpoint, the stress and the responsibility for learning is shifted from the student and taken to the teaching procedures. That is, it is not the student that has to adapt, usually without proper conditions, her way of learning to the pace of the class, but rather the pace and the dynamics of the class ought to be adapted to allow the participation and learning of every student.

In order to do that, the classes have to acquire a dynamic that is so open that, while keeping the conducting thread, leaves room for diversified activities that encourage the participation and collaboration of all. In an inclusive school, cooperation – and not competition – is the instrument used to encourage learning. Each student should get the proper conditions to know her own learning process, its features and needs; to have conscience of her own limits and, as a goal, to overcome them. In an inclusive school, the student “competes” only against herself, developing a process we could call self-knowledge – or meta-evaluation of her own learning (its pace and peculiarities).

The great barrier emerges, in part, because our teachers were not prepared, either pedagogically or psychologically, to deal with students with different individual needs, especially if those involve sensorial or psycho-mobility related disabilities, or serious cognitive, behavioral and/or communicational compromises. Even though teacher training has not been our focal topic, one can not talk about curriculum and school daily life without
underlining the role of the teacher. Thus, we believe that the line between curricular discussion and teacher training is, in a way, an artificial one, and the only productive way of conceiving the inclusive curriculum is to connect it to the understanding the teacher has of that same curriculum and its pedagogical practice close to all the students she intends to contemplate.

Not a doubt remains that, for the teacher to effectively act in an inclusive manner, she should be, before all, a researcher, systematically planning, collecting data, analyzing, reflecting, and transforming her practice. If that attitude is fundamental in any teaching-learning situation, it is even more so in Inclusive Education projects, where there is a lack of evaluated and publicized systematic experiences that allow us to abandon the trial and error system that has been so common in most of our educational projects.

One has to point out that inclusive education can not be a way of denying the specific educational needs of each student. In face of that, the group even proposed that one should not talk about inclusion for all, but rather for each one. The individualization of the teaching-learning process is the base upon which an inclusive curriculum is built. That implies recognizing the individual features and difficulties, in order to then determine the kinds of adaptations that are necessary for the student to learn.

Some members of the group consider it important that the teacher knows a little bit about each type of special need, if nothing more to know where and when to seek help. That is where the Special Education contribution fits in, not trying to import the specialized methods and techniques to the regular class, but rather becoming a permanent and effective support system, to deal with the special needs not only of the student but also of the regular class teacher. That support system should be available in the school itself, with inclusive education qualified professionals.

It should be also stressed that, making specialized meetings available for students with special needs that are facing difficulties in keeping up with the class, does not contradict the inclusion model. Especially the ones more cognitively handicapped will certainly need that support, as well as blind and deaf students in their alphabetization and language acquisition process. The paradigm shift happens in the role the specialist plays. At the inclusive school, she acts like a support for the regular teacher, not his replacement: learning has to occur in class, together with the rest; otherwise we will not be dealing with an inclusive model (which is what happened in some of the cases presented at the seminar).

In other words, inclusion can not be the sole responsibility of Special Education. It is not a simple matter of the Special Education teacher dictating the regular class teacher how to deal with that student. If an integrated work dynamic is not created, as it was mentioned before, we will be creating a special system within the regular school, which is not Inclusive Education.

It was also stressed in the discussions that, when talking about curricular individualization, one is not talking only about students with certain types of special needs, but claiming instead that the curriculum should be tailored to each student. That is what dealing with diversity means; since a seeing student and a blind student may have more affinities in their learning process than, for example, two students with the same degree of visual incapacity. That viewpoint deconstructs the labeling and stigmatizing paradigm that looks at the student with a particular focus on her disability, and not on her global personality and development process. Before being disabled, they are first of all students, and the teacher has as great responsibility for teaching them as for teaching the rest. If they exhibit differentiated features, with which the teacher is not capable of dealing alone, while attending the rest of the class, the school has to provide specialized support. That support should be available for all students presenting any permanent or temporary difficulty in keeping up with the work performed in the classroom, and not just for those that came forwarded from special education.
According to that viewpoint, it was quite clear in the live discussions of the seminar, and online through the Internet, that the inclusion process has wide amplitude, ranging beyond the insertion of students that are seen as special in the regular class, and beyond casuistic adaptations of the curricular structure. Inclusion implies that the whole school and its managers be involved, a redimension of its politico-pedagogical project, and, most of all, the political compromise of restructuring the priorities of the school system (municipal, state, federal, or private) to which the school belongs, so that it has the necessary material and human conditions to attempt that transformation.

It drew our attention the fact that, in both discussions, the topic of evaluation, even though it was considered of fundamental importance to the creation of an inclusive curriculum, was never given any depth, especially in what concerns the exchange of experiences and evaluation alternatives. The absence of evaluation criteria and methods defined for the learning of students who do not fit traditional evaluation is a matter of great worry to us, since it keeps us from both designing and monitoring the necessary curricular adaptations.

For a new evaluation paradigm to be achieved some of the discussed aspects become fundamental, amongst them the need of knowing and starting from the student’s learning potential and the advances she achieves when compared to her own performance, before she is compared to others. The evaluation situations can also become precious learning moments, if we see them as revealing interventions regarding difficulties and errors.

The student we are evaluating can have different learning characteristics from the ones the teacher is used to dealing with, which is going to require special attention, but it does not mean her mental structure and the quality of her learning are necessarily challenged, when compared to other students. It does mean that we have to define certain clear and specific criteria for this evaluation, and not that we have to practice it in a paternalistic way.

It is important to also evaluate the real inclusion conditions offered to the students, since that is the goal of the work developed. It is necessary to have the nerve to dare, in what concerns evaluation, breaking with traditional practices, and creating adaptations, the same way that was proposed regarding the general curriculum – and the institution and “actors” that implement it, the educational context, including policies and the community and family environment that make it up.

Evaluation should not be seen as the student’s trial, but rather as an indicator, for the teacher, of what paths to walk, and in that sense it is necessary to separate which difficulties rest with the student and which were caused by wrong pedagogical practices and procedures. Every evaluation requires corresponding actions, in the way of improving the teaching-learning process. If that does not happen, we will be evaluating for the sole purpose of labeling, and hence of discriminating and excluding.

Before closing, we present a synthesis of the main obstacles and possibilities of an inclusive curriculum, as they were highlighted in the topic discussions, making it clear that this table is far from complete. This type of instrument can be used by the school in its own the inclusion process evaluation, since the table can and should be modified any moment that these and other obstacles are overcome, expanding the column of possibilities.
Inclusive Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main obstacles</th>
<th>Main possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The excluding society surrounding the school and the families.</td>
<td>• Initiatives, such as this forum, allowing the exchange and debate of ideas between the persons who work and worry with inclusion in a wide sense, and Inclusive Education in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The precariousness of general Education conditions in our country.</td>
<td>• The development of policies that effectively contemplate inclusion, generating the corresponding educational management processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Failures in the initial and continuous training of teachers and other professionals who deal with the students presenting special educational needs.</td>
<td>• Interaction with the students in building pedagogical proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulties conceptualizing, planning, implementing, and evaluating Curricula.</td>
<td>• Application of methodological diversification in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excessive number of students in class.</td>
<td>• Publicizing successful experiments in the field, encouraging the exchange of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School implementation of less significant curricular adaptations (such as the changes in the simple physical structure), leaving aside the truly significant changes, requiring the involvement of the institution as a whole.</td>
<td>• Wide discussions on evaluation paradigms and procedures, confronting them with the table of “learning difficulties” we find in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excessive number of readings and academic work, without organizing a support system, especially at the 3rd grade level.</td>
<td>• Strengthening of the cooperation process between students who, by helping their colleagues, will be learning themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before closing this synthesis, we wish to reafrm the certainty, shared by all participants of the two discussion moments, that there is not a “single recipe”, a closed model of inclusive curriculum, or “top-down” imposed political guideline, which can take charge of turning a traditional school into an inclusive school. Each school, each class, each teacher, and most of all each student, represents a different reality, and it is the actors themselves, directly involved in the daily inclusion process, who are best qualified to determine, in practice, the best path to be followed.

Our group’s contribution, in that regard, was simply to highlight some of the main aspects of school practice that need to be transformed, to identify some of the “knots” or obstacles in the way of that paradigm shift, besides proposing some strategies to untie the knots, leaving the thread free to be woven by each teacher in her classroom.

As it was pointed on several occasions in this report, it is important that future works on inclusive education concentrate on matters regarding its implementation in the school’s daily life, having the goal of outlining pedagogical practices, and adapting contents, teaching methodologies, and alternative evaluation models. It is of fundamental importance the development and publication of studies and research on longitudinal inclusion experiments, with data on the special student’s school trajectories, as well as changes in the way teachers act, and academic and social implications for the school as a whole.
On a final note, one can not stress enough, as we have said, that this change can not be imposed and that it is crucial to take into account the vision the people with special needs themselves have of the inclusion process, as well as what the students in general think of the curricula and the means to educate.

Inclusive discussions, such as the ones we had in this forum, are a decisive step in that democratic direction of teaching. In it, this group’s “passion”, the involvement with the struggle for inclusion, the desire to learn more on this – fundamental to education – topic, the deep conviction that in a not so distant future Inclusive Education will be disseminated and a concrete reality in our country, all became apparent.