A Theoretical Essay about Inclusion and the Role of Teachers in Building an Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

This article is a theoretical essay that revisits the concept of inclusive education and places teachers at the heart of the educational commitment of all schools, which means, quality education for all students. The teacher's knowledge, attitudes and values influence the building of a learning environment that facilitates a focus on the needs of each student, placing the student in the middle of the edification of an inclusive school. In this article, we will, on one hand, value the need for the teacher to move towards the development of differentiated pedagogical practices in the classroom, where pedagogical differentiation, as a principle of positive discrimination, is a way of guaranteeing equal opportunities in accessing teaching and learning. On the other hand, we will also consider reflective practice as a privileged resource for the teacher to develop new skills and knowledge. Teachers who reflect on their practices tend to adopt professional attitudes that lead to self-critique, commitment, responsibility, and autonomy. Being a reflective teacher is a pathway to the birth of a different teacher; a teacher capable of improving teaching competencies by creating learning opportunities that will facilitate the implementation of different methodological approaches.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Pedagogical Differentiation, Reflective Teacher

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I. INTRODUCTION

The World Conference on Education for All (Thailand, 1990), the Salamanca Declaration on Principles, Policies and Practices in the Field of Special Educational Needs (1994) and the Luxembourg Charter on Education for All (1996) contributed strongly to raising awareness and changing attitudes regarding the inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream classrooms. The World Conference held in Salamanca (1994) enshrined the concept of "Inclusion" and envisaged the need to change educational systems, in the sense of creating "Inclusive Schools" capable of welcoming all students and providing them with the means to achieve their maximum potential. The Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) advocates the fundamental principle of Inclusive schools:

"(…) all students should learn together, whenever possible, regardless of the difficulties and differences they present. Schools must recognize and satisfy the different needs of their students, adapting to the various styles and paces of learning, to guarantee a good level of education for all through adequate curricula, school planning, pedagogical strategies, adequate resources and cooperation with the respective communities" (p.11-12).

Capucha (2010) refers to those new perspectives and new ways of looking at the school's "Mission" after the Salamanca Declaration. These perspectives point out that an inclusive school is intended for all students. Sanches and Teodoro (2006) advocate that inclusive schools should have the following characteristics: a) they reflect the community as a whole; b) its members are open, positive and diverse; c) do not select, do not exclude, do not reject; d) has no barriers and is not competitive; e) practice democracy and educational equity. Inclusive education becomes the guiding principle of policies and strategies that aim to eliminate the barriers that are placed in the access to school for all students and find in it the appropriate conditions to carry out their learning process (Schuelka, 2017). It is a purpose that indicates the effort to try to respond to diversity, through quality education for every student, having the aim to consolidate the ideal of inclusion. It presupposes planning of the school's resources, and the involvement of all educational intervenients and social actors of the educational community and implies that teachers collaborate with each other and with other professionals, sharing challenges and experiences.

This theoretical essay intends to call attention to the role of the teacher in the construction of inclusive education, highlighting initially the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education and finalising with an emphasis on two

distinct but complementary principles that depend on teachers alone and which, in our view, could make the difference in the path of meaningful learning/development for all students.

II. INCLUSION – SLOWLY, BUT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Florian *et al.* (2017) mention that in addition to the universal access and school attendance of all students, the great educational commitment present in the inclusive school is the right to learning. This implies that it is the school´s responsibility to ensure that everyone, despite the severity of their problem, has quality education, public and free, according to their characteristics, diversity and needs. Ferreira *et al.* (2015a) define an inclusive school as an institution of mainstream education, where students with diverse abilities, characteristics and, consequently, needs, can learn together, where the school adapts teaching and learning to the needs of each student, accepting and valuing differences to promote equal opportunities. Sanches and Teodoro (2006) add that the objective of inclusion is not to erase differences but to allow all students their singularity, providing an educational community that validates and values their individuality.

Correia (2003) considers that the education of children with disabilities is a human right, and since inclusive education generates success for all, it became an educational movement that implies also ethical, social and political factors. For Ainscow (2016) a school will be more inclusive and richer the greater the diversity of its population. This must be seen positively and not as something to be avoided, as the individual characteristics of some do not constitute a threat and should serve to complement the enrichment of a diverse and open culture. Correia (2003) states that inclusion calls for a school that values the whole child, not just the child-student and that, consequently, seeks to respond to the needs of all students in a flexible context, supported by human and material resources planning. Only in this way we can adequately respond to students' needs and provide them with adequate education, counteracting a disabling society, which emphasizes their limits more than their potential. Given this drive, all professionals must change their practices and teachers must accept the responsibility of educating all students according to their abilities. This presupposes a student-centred pedagogy and requires teachers to work as a team, to become problem solvers, promoting an education that considers academic, socio and emotional and personal development.

Ainscow (2016) emphasizes that it is not enough for students with special needs to attend the same space and the same classroom in mainstream schools. They must take part, feel, and be felt as intervening members of the school community. According to Silva (2009),

"All students are at school to learn, and we must not forget that being included is much more than a physical presence: it is a feeling and a practice of belonging between the school and the child, that is, the student feels that he belongs to the school and the school feels that it is responsible for the student" (p.148).

In this way, students are seen as active agents of their learning, which leads to the need to opt for a differentiated pedagogy, that is, a pedagogy concerned with matching the differences and specificities of each student to their educational needs and offering everyone learning situations for achieving equal opportunities of success. This encompasses the idea that the difference of each student should be understood as an asset because it serves to enrich everyone in particular (Villa & Thousand, 2016).

Correia (2003), Fullan (2007), Ferreira *et al.* (2015a) point out several assumptions for the construction of truly inclusive schools: a) a sense of community – since the philosophy of the inclusive school is based on the fact that all students must be accepted and supported by their peers and adults; b) all students must have a quality education and learn together – since heterogeneity and diversity are factors that facilitate learning, participation and development; c) differentiation – the process through which individual needs are recognized and responded to by promoting opportunities for cooperation and social participation in the classroom; d) pedagogical leadership assumed by the Government Bodies – an important aspect in the construction of an inclusive culture, which should be based on sharing, participation, solidarity and mutual help extended to the entire school community; e) cooperation between teachers – plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive education, as relationships of mutual trust and sharing of goals are facilitators for the construction of diversified learning contexts; f) cooperation between students – interactions and individual responsibility within the group, with the aim of optimizing the active participation of all students in the process of building their own development; g) curriculum flexibility – the curriculum must take into account the needs and characteristics of students; h) an inclusive school philosophy – the preparation of professionals requires a model of continuous training and the adoption of collaborative practices; i) educational agent's values – persons who share principles such as: solidarity, mutual help, acceptance and respect for difference.

Despite recognizing the progress and the path already taken in terms of inclusive education, Florian *et al.* (2017) raise some considerations about the challenges that are still faced in this journey. The authors highlight the diversity of practices in the schools, the need for rethinking special education schools, some inadequate resource allocation mechanisms, specific teacher training, improvement of auxiliary staff competencies and transition to adulthood and the labour market. Building an inclusive school implies both a significant restructuring of the school and the curriculum. Sailor (2015) states that it is in these schools that a supportive and tolerant generation will be formed and those who have difficulties or disabilities will learn to live in the heterogeneous world that we live in.

III. TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – THE PATH IS WINDING, BUT IT CAN BE FOLLOWED STEP BY STEP

Underlying the inclusion process is the assumption that the teacher has certain knowledge and understanding of the needs of the different students, and about teaching techniques and methodologies. Florian and Rouse (2009) state that "Initial teacher education should aim to prepare

teachers to enter a profession that accepts an individual and collective responsibility for improving the learning and participation of all children" (p. 596) Savolainen (2009) states that teachers play an essential role in quality education, adding that the quality of an educational system depends on the quality of its teachers.

Bailleul *et al.* (2008) suggest that teacher quality contributes more to student achievement than any other factor, more than the number of students in the class or the resources available. The need for "high-quality" teachers equipped to meet the needs of all students becomes essential to not only provide equal opportunities for all but also to build an inclusive society. Forlin and Chambers (2011) state that it is the teacher's knowledge, beliefs and values that underpin the creation of effective and fruitful learning environments, making the teacher a decisive influence on the development of an inclusive school. Today, society expects schools to effectively address different languages and experiences of learning, to be culturally and gender-sensitive, to promote tolerance and social cohesion, and to respond effectively to disadvantaged students, including students with learning disabilities. This means that teachers need confidence in their abilities and must be available to learn and develop new teaching skills. Only then, they will be prepared to face the actual challenges present in schools (Marin, 2014).

Arnesen *et al.* (2009) mention that "inclusion should be understood not only as an extra that is added to the existing structures but as a process of transforming societies, communities and institutions so that schools become sensitive to the diversity" (p. 46). The authors point out that the international commitment to human rights has led to a decrease in the emphasis on the "disability" of an individual. This view is consistent with the disability perspective that recognizes disability as "another interesting way of being alive" (Smith & Leonard, 2005) and sees individual support as the norm for all students. Ballard (2003) states that inclusive education is concerned with issues of social justice, which means that professionals entering the teaching profession must understand how they can create classrooms and schools that value mutual respect, ethics, social justice and equity. Respect for the difference must always be present at the school. The school must respond to all students and must consider the adoption of differentiated pedagogical practices, focused on cooperation, supporting learning and responding to the individual needs in the learning activities (Verdugo *et al.*, 2012). Fullan (2007) reminds us that a school is first and foremost a physical and temporal space in which each student finds the necessary resources they need to learn, to develop their full cognitive, social and affective potential.

According to Blaz (2008), when teachers have a student with Special Needs in the class, they should be interested in the particular aspects involved in the education of that same student, emphasizing not only the academic but also the social and emotional issues. Slee (2010) states that students with Special Needs have characteristics and singularities, which have an impact on accessing curriculum content, and may require specific approaches to teaching and learning. In this perspective, it is important to identify, from the outset, the main difficulties/barriers to the implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum adjustments or accommodations might be needed, and school resources must be assigned to promote true inclusion in the classroom.

According to the study developed by Humphrey and Lewis (2008), it is possible to highlight two aspects regarding the practices developed by teachers in educational contexts with children with special needs: a) little differentiation in their pedagogical routines. This situation gives rise to decontextualized practices, contributing, little or nothing, to the inclusion of these students in classrooms; b) little clarification regarding who is responsible for the learning and involvement of these students; the class teacher or the special education teacher? In line with these practices, Watkins (2007) states that classrooms that include students with Special Needs often have problems due to inefficient pedagogical responses to their needs.

The teacher's attitude plays an important role in the students' development and learning, being fundamental for the success of any educational change, particularly in the construction of an inclusive school. Verdugo *et al.* (2012) claim that for the school to be truly inclusive, it is not enough for teachers to adopt this conceptualisation, but they must have the knowledge that allows them to teach students with different learning abilities in the same classroom. According to Ferreira *et al.* (2015a), for the operationalization of these changes, schools must consider that all students are everyone's responsibility, requiring a significant change in the ways of thinking and acting of many teachers. Thus, to follow the ideals of inclusion, it is important to consider the knowledge, experiences and collaboration of all educational agents, including staff from the support services. The same authors also refer that currently, we still regularly hear many teachers verbalize phrases such as:

"I understand and agree that all students have the same right to education, but how am I going to handle them all? I have a group of 25 students, how is it possible to include them within this group?"

"I am not prepared to welcome a "special" child into my classroom; I have many students and they all need my attention."

"I don't have time to respond to a student with special needs in my classroom. If so, the other students were left behind."

A study by Ferreira *et al.* (2020) reveals that teachers and schools still have many gaps in the implementation of an inclusive school, highlighting: a) the lack of specialized training, b) classes with a high number of students, c) inadequate intervention spaces, d) few human resources e) and a lot of document bureaucracy. Morgado (2003) points out that teachers raise the quality of their practice when: they promote student autonomy; establish a positive climate in the classroom; demonstrate positive expectations; organize the work consistently according to the group needs; regulate the teaching/learning process, reinforce student success and commitment; encourage cooperative work; differentiate teaching methodologies and diversify strategies. The same author states that mainstream education teachers are the most important resource in the learning process of students with Special Needs, stating that if these professionals feel little competence to facilitate the learning

of these students, they will tend to develop more negative pedagogical attitudes, resulting in less interaction with these students.

Correia (2003) states that teachers who have positive perceptions about the inclusion of students with Special Needs reveal a more dynamic and interactive role in their professional development. The report presented by the European Agency for Development in Special Educational Needs (SEN) (2003) mentions the importance of the teacher in the implementation of inclusive education:

"The attitude of teachers was indicated as a decisive factor in building inclusive schools. If teachers do not accept the education of all students as an integral part of their work, they will try to get someone (often the special education teacher) to take responsibility for students with SEN and organize "covert" segregation in the school" (p.13).

Inclusive teachers collaborate and plan more together, learn new techniques, use more strategies to teach all students and actively participate in their training, showing an adaptive attitude towards the heterogeneity of the class (Cook *et al.*, 2007). There are advantages to including students with Special Needs because sometimes the difficulties presented by some of these students force teachers to rethink the practices and management of the classroom to improve learning capacity, cooperation, and mutual understanding. As mentioned by Cross *et al.* (2004) to follow the path toward an inclusive education there is a need to create a set of practices that should be based on collaboration and teamwork. It is not expected that the teacher has all the knowledge and competencies necessary to meet the diversity of the entire school population. Thus, pedagogical support must be built and made available for helping the teachers in their routines, making them progressively autonomous in their ability to solve problems and promoting the improvement of their pedagogical practices.

Rodrigues and Lima-Rodrigues (2011) list three aspects for creating positive attitudes in teachers towards the challenge of inclusive education: knowledge and discussion of successful stories and good practices; establishment of cooperative relationships between educational agents to have a balanced and comprehensive view of the student; investment in in-service training (continuous training), to avoid teachers' fixation on pre-established ideas and attitudes. Ferreira *et al.* (2020) maintain that although a positive path has been taken in terms of inclusion within the last decade, it is still important to reflect on the attitudes and representations that some teachers have about inclusive education. These representations significantly impact the implementation of inclusive practices within mainstream education classrooms.

IV. WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

A. Part 1 – From Differentiated Learning Experiences to Meaningful Activities

We believe that students with Special Needs can achieve higher levels of learning and acquire higher levels of competencies when teaching and learning conditions based on a differentiated pedagogy are provided. What makes the difference is a pedagogy focused on the developmental level of each student, supported by a small group or one-to-one pedagogical intervention to increase the intensity of the direct intervention and the instructional time. Bender (2008) and Ferreira (2017) identify the importance of implementing different actions to facilitate the inclusion of these students, such as 1. building an affective and trusting learning community, facilitating stable, positive and emotional learning environments; 2. early intervention and instruction focused on behavioural evidence; 3. the existence of a multidisciplinary team that supports the inclusion in the classroom context; 4. the collaboration of students, parents, teachers, psychologist, other educational technicians and school leadership in the realisation of the individualized educational plan; 5. the development of a continuous and uninterrupted evaluation plan.

Differentiated pedagogy helps students with Special Needs because it facilitates a learning environment in which differences are not only tolerated but are expected and valued. This approach supports an inclusive education system in which all students have the best learning opportunities. The diversity of the pedagogical options and the support available in a classroom with differentiated pedagogy meet the unique needs of each student, including students with Special Needs. Teachers who use a differentiated pedagogy approach will be more willing to adapt their teaching methodologies and meet the needs of students with learning difficulties, that is, those who initially need more intensive and diversified teaching (Ferreira *et al.*, 2015b).

The idea of inclusion is inevitably related to the concepts of educational diversity and pedagogical differentiation, and as a principle of positive discrimination, it is a way of guaranteeing all students equal opportunities in the classroom. Inclusion as a school-centred process emphasizes the need to restructure the curriculum to respond to the needs of all students. This assumption is based on the pedagogical sense of the right that everyone has to education, that they can be themselves, whatever their history and characteristics, while being guaranteed educational success. Schools will have to move away from teaching-learning models centred on the curriculum and start to give relevance to student-centred models in which the construction of teaching is based on individual needs (Sailor, 2015). The perspective that the curriculum is designed for all students, regardless of their characteristics, and that what should be diversified are the means that are provided to each student, leads us to a differentiated pedagogy and the concept of pedagogical differentiation. This differentiation means "breaking" many of the classroom's daily routines, implying a pedagogical plan that integrates teaching and learning procedures, providing each student with a challenging and motivating learning situation (Ferreira, 2017).

The implementation of a differentiated pedagogy in a classroom implies the reorganization of activities and interactions to allow for each student to be confronted with enriching pedagogical situations. A differentiated pedagogy leads us, on the one hand, to the general organization of the school, with the creation of opportunities for students to have time, spaces and material resources that allow them to

develop their learning, and, on the other hand, to the organization of the pedagogical work within the class, where the teacher plans for the class and activities, considering the students' differences, which can imply to allow each student to organize their work. The teacher's malleability and ability to improvise become relevant, allowing the modification of plans and activities according to the individual responses of the students (Lenz *et al.*, 2004).

Pedagogical differentiation includes planning and acting according to a heterogeneous group with different paces and learning styles. It is learning in the group and with the group, in truly cooperative and responsible learning. It is to organize space and time according to the learning activities and it is to involve students in the construction of knowledge. The school's current task is to be able to recognize differences, not only cultural differences, but also in terms of learning rhythms, interests and abilities in the plurality of its students, and to find adaptation and development strategies that respect and includes everyone (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2010).

In a differentiated classroom, a single teaching method will never be able to cover and be pedagogically effective for all students. Diverse teaching and learning pathways will be necessary for everyone to achieve their goals (Carpenter *et al.*, 2017). The development of differentiated learning experiences involves a proactive role by the teacher, to ensure that all students, without exception, are involved in different and meaningful contexts and activities. In a flexible classroom, the teacher's role should focus on designing and selecting learning opportunities for students, while guiding and working with them to monitor their learning evolution. The role of students should be to value not only factual and declarative knowledge, but also processes of autonomy, motivation and trust.

We can characterize meaningful learning activities as all learning activities adjusted to the learning potential of the group of students, which can be related to relevant, authentic, engaging and appropriate life experiences for all students. Meaningful activities are conceptually conceived in a perspective that involves a common understanding between the student and the pedagogical practice. Activities must actively and continuously involve students in processes of exploration, questioning, application and reflection on content and skills. These activities may include opportunities to a) identify similarities and differences; b) summarize and take notes; c) use and build visual representations; d) generate and test hypotheses; e) use data, questions and other information organizers to make sense to learning (Strickland, 2009).

The decisions made by the teacher about the organization and implementation of activities that are meaningful to the students should be based on the perspective that the tasks to be implemented are adjusted for the group and each student per se. This is not an easy task. Kingore (2005) highlights some teacher's strategies that can facilitate this individualization process: a) Explicitly discuss the objective and importance of the activity with the students; b) Provide clear information on what is expected of the activity and give precise instructions on how to carry it out, reducing uncertainties, surprises and discontent; c) Challenge all students to work in a motivated way, regardless of their potential; d) Use the information previously collected about the students, to adapt the activity and resources to the interests, previous experiences and preferences of the students, e) Anticipate the challenges and difficulties that are expected to happen during the activity and be prepared to provide the necessary support to overcome difficulties; f) Share and/or develop assessment tools with students (criteria, rules, examples) to clarify expectations; g) Provide the necessary resources for students to carry out the activity, making them accessible, engaging and understandable; h) Be focused on learning, plan for effective teaching to create a moment of confidence and energy; i) Evaluate and improve the activity to maximize learning.

Best practices are most often associated with meaningful learning activities. In our view, learning activities centred on a differentiated pedagogy should encompass diverse materials and resources. For example, in sharing ideas and information with students we can use visual information, personal narratives, objects, music and poetry. Providing students with multiple sources of information for their projects and activities will allow adjustment of teaching to different students' approaches to learning and different cognitive skills (Carpenter *et al.*, 2017). The implementation of these activities creates learning opportunities and provides support for students to build their knowledge, developing skills according to different needs, interests and preferences, promoting positive peer relationships and a meaningful educational environment.

B. Part 2 – The Reflective Teacher as a Facilitator of Inclusive Education

Since the 1980s, the concept of reflection has been receiving additional attention in discourses and studies on the teaching-learning process. Reflective practice, reflective action, reflective training and reflective teaching have become unavoidable expressions for anyone wishing to present an updated pedagogical vocabulary. Bengtsson (1995) adds that, within these expressions, it is also possible to identify the intentions of "reflection", that is, to know what it leads to, recognizing a "certain function of clarification", to transform the individual into an autonomous and self-sufficient professional. Bengtsson (1995) considers that the array of uses of the term "reflection" deserves to be clarified, suggesting the analysis of the two properties that characterize it – self-reflection and meditation. With the clarification of the term "reflection", its meaning in teaching becomes more explicit and allows us to embrace that reflective practice can promote the continuous and systematic development of teachers, in which teachers are recognized as professionals who play an active role in formulating the purposes of their work. This recognition implies that the teacher has the means to produce his methods and principles, contributing to an organized base of knowledge about teaching throughout his professional career (Zeichner, 2003).

Dewey (1933) defines reflective thinking as that which involves an active, determined and careful belief or practice, considering the reasons that support it and the consequences to which it leads. The author believes that reflection does not consist of a series of steps/procedures to be used by teachers, but on the contrary, it should be understood as a

universal way of knowing and responding to the challenges that arise daily. We add to this understanding the fact that positive attitudes such as enthusiasm, responsibility and self-confidence play a crucial role in the way we reflect and how we solve daily challenges. Lalanda and Abrantes (1996) emphasize the relevance of the "temporal nature" of the reflective activity, recognizing the interference of the past and the future in the reflective act. In addition to these temporal dimensions, other contextual factors can cause vicissitudes in the reflection process. It is essential to consider personal dispositions such as availability, willingness and the need for reflection as essential elements for the quality of reflective practice.

John Dewey (1933, 1944) was one of the first to write about reflective practice with his inquiry into experience, interaction, and reflection. Schön followed Dewey's theories, defining reflective practice as the practice by which practitioners become aware of their implicit knowledge and learn from their experience (Schön, 1983). Schön (1987; 1991) argues about reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection-in-action is reflecting on behaviour as it happens, whereas reflection-on-action is a reflection after the event, to review, analyse, and evaluate the situation. Another term that Schön introduces is "knowledge in action" to describe tacit knowledge. Reflection in action is the reflexive form of knowledge in action: Schön assumes that "competent professionals often know more than they can say" (Schön, 1983, p. 8). We firmly believe that reflection is a path to the emancipation of the teacher, that is, someone who decides and finds pleasure in teaching, learning and research and that the reflective path of each teacher can be a unique way to facilitate inclusive education. Reflection can be difficult and laborious because it forces us to be honest with ourselves. Being reflective is like being our observer and our critical friend.

How the teacher experiences the diversity of contexts in which he/she works and carries out reflective practice throughout his/her career influences the way he/she regularly faces challenges and adversities (Webb *et al.*, 2009). Teachers who use reflective practices are led to assumptions of adopting professional postures such as being critical, being committed, being responsible and being autonomous. This is a path to the birth of a different teacher; a teacher who goes beyond the knowledge of technique; that is, they reflect on the practice / on the action in the classroom, creating opportunities for the construction of new professional knowledge. In this way, the teacher develops a new set of skills that provide, among others, self-confidence, the ability to recognize emotions and thoughts, the ability to establish healthy relationships and the ability to make constructive and important choices. It is in these reflexive dynamics and a school context that the teacher learns to build and transform their professional knowledge, essential for the development of pedagogical practices in general and inclusive practices in a more specific way. Teamwork, sharing experiences and establishing rewarding relationships with peers are fundamental references for promoting meaningful and motivating moments and, at the same time, for professional well-being (Shank, 2005).

"Good teachers are born, not made". This old maxim is completely wrong. Research shows a strong link between teacher professionalism and teachers' perceived status, self-efficacy, and professional development (Lauermann & König, 2016). Initial teacher training provides a solid basis for teachers' professional development, but ongoing training that values moments of supervision, reflection and personal growth is essential (Durksen & Klassen, 2012). Continuing professional development plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance, commitment and job satisfaction (Schleicher, 2018) and can become a vehicle of excellence for transforming beliefs and attitudes about the development of the desired and truly inclusive school. Reflective processes that involve monitoring the effectiveness of teachers' interventions in the classroom, the frequency of collaborative work with colleagues, analyses of their attitudes towards other cultures, and examining the practices they develop for students' success can be the first step in changing teachers' beliefs and improving practices for the implementation of an inclusive school.

V. Concluding Remarks

Currently, the construction of an inclusive school where each and everyone, regardless of personal and social situation, finds answers that allow acquiring a level of education and training that facilitates students' full potential is the school's main goal. Each school must recognize the added value of the diversity of its students, find ways to deal with this difference, adapt the teaching processes to the individual characteristics of each student, mobilizing the resources at its disposal, so that everyone can learn and participate in the life of the educational community (OECD, 2018).

The autonomy of schools and their professionals and the definition of strategies for monitoring curricular diversification must become a guiding principle for the entire functioning of the teaching and learning process. Pedagogical differentiation practices and reflective practices are the two central components that we have valued in this theoretical-conceptual essay. Two components that only depend on the teachers' actions and attitudes. Hence, their implementation becomes inexpensive and relatively easy. It all depends on the teacher's motivation and interest in being available to change their practices and get involved in an activity that promotes an inclusive school. In this way, curriculum management measures that allow access to the curriculum and learning activities in the classroom through the diversification and appropriate combination of various teaching methods and strategies, the use of different assessment modalities, the adaptation of educational materials and resources and the removal of barriers in the organization of space and equipment become essential to the inclusion process (Villa & Thousand, 2016).

We believe that only a dynamic, innovative and resourceful teacher has the will to change practices. Firstly, move towards flexible management of the curriculum, so that the educational activities in its methods, times, spaces, instruments and tasks can respond to the singularities of each student. And secondly, consider not only the needs of the student but also their interests and preferences, valuing the expression of their cultural and linguistic identity, creating opportunities for the expression of their rights and

participation in decision-making. Pedagogical differentiation is a methodological instrument that privileges this flexibility and diversity (Ferreira, 2017). In a model of pedagogical differentiation, students must have multiple and distinct opportunities to reveal their learning. The activities proposed by the teacher must be flexible enough to receive different levels of contribution, from the simplest to the most complex, adjusting to the different levels of students' abilities (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). In this way, the conditions will be created for students to express different levels of knowledge and competence, facing tasks with different degrees of complexity, involving and challenging all students to learn. The planning of these tasks, with different levels of complexity, should be the primary objective of the teacher that values inclusive education and will allow the students to observe and learn with peers with greater potential.

A reflective teacher engages effectively in their work and regularly assesses their assumptions and beliefs, as well as the results of their practices, assuming an attitude of one who can always learn something new (Moon, 2004). Teachers continually strive to understand their practice and how it impacts students (Pollard & Lee, 2003). It is in this reflexive dynamic that the teacher learns to build and transform their professional knowledge essential to the virtuous development of their pedagogical practices, facilitating the professional development conducive to the construction of an inclusive school.

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