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## THE IDEA OF INCLUSION AS PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION – CONTEXTS RELEVANT TO SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION\*

**Introduction:** Social inclusion involves countering social inequality, separation and marginalisation, whilst valuing diversity. The phenomenon of inclusion, perceived in the context of inclusive education in the perspective of special education, signifies the inclusion of categories of difference in the scope of commonality.

**Research Aim:** The research problem is a question of what the idea of social inclusion is as a philosophy of education, with which fundamental conceptual categories, central to the issue at hand, it corresponds to and how this idea conceptually integrates within the area of special education interests. The cognitive objective of the research was to explore the meaning of inclusion understood as levelling out social inequalities, increasing social participation for groups disadvantaged by difference in opportunities, and valuing diversity as a high priority category for special education.

**Evidence-based Facts:** The main focus is to reflect upon the meaning of inclusion, inclusive community and inclusive culture, diversity and difference in relation to the philosophy of education and the learning environment. The essential context of the discussion amounts to an analysis of the core conceptual categories and the transmission of the idea of inclusion into the paradigmatic space of special education.

**Summary:** Special education is a space of equal opportunities, and inclusive education is one of the most effective emancipatory tools for bridging social inequalities. Inclusive education is seen as a transformative zone in which the vision of practical possibilities for the implementation and legitimacy of the idea of social inclusion is increasingly gaining greater validity.

**Keywords:** social inclusion, philosophy of education, inclusive community, inclusive culture, diversity, special education

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## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary inclusion movement in Europe fosters key European ideas: social cohesion, society oriented towards knowledge, knowledge-based economy and the concept of lifelong learning. Social inclusion is an idea developed in various social, educational and political discourses. At its core, it is multifaceted and interdisciplinary (Witten, 2021). This paper adopts a broad understanding of the concept of social inclusion, wherein it is presented in a broader theoretical and practical context – it encompasses the field of social welfare, economics, a wide variety of cultures, and is present in education as well.

The theoretical perspective requires defining fundamental conceptual categories, essential to the issue at hand: *social inclusion*, *inclusive community*, *inclusive culture* – in relation to the philosophy of education and the learning environment. There is a need to establish what the phenomenon of inclusion entails, as understood in the context of inclusive education in the perspective of special education, and what the inclusion of categories of difference represents in terms of collectivity – when diversity is included in what is shared. The context shall certainly be complemented by an in-depth analysis of inclusive education (*high-quality education* for all learners) seen through the prism of educational policy and as an educational model which in this study – due to text volume limitations – was consciously omitted, with only an indication of the main thoughts relevant to the discussion. The study forms a part of the line of thought on building an inclusive society and the importance of education in the process of reconstruction of the social world. The author is convinced that the hope for a change in the culture of contemporary schools, as well as of models of upbringing and teaching, should be sought out in inclusive education.

## RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

The research problem focuses on an attempt to answer the question of what the idea of social inclusion is as a philosophy of education, with which fundamental conceptual categories, central to the issue at hand, it corresponds to and how this idea conceptually integrates within the area of special education interests. The cognitive objective of the research was to explore the meaning of inclusion understood as levelling out social inequalities, increasing social participation and the possibility to have a dignified life for groups disadvantaged by difference in opportunities, and valuing diversity as a high priority category for special education.

## EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

From a historical perspective, signs of the inclusion project were already evident in some concepts of the New Upbringing, in pedagogy of pragmatism, in pedagogical philanthropism, and were constituted in the output of social pedagogy (Ernst-Milerska, 2022). This idea was clearly formulated in the field of special education, as well as in the reform and contestation currents of the educational order of pedagogy of liberation and critical pedagogy. Nowadays, intercultural pedagogy also performs an important awareness-raising role in this respect (Grzybowski, 2008). The semantic scope of the idea of inclusion is, thus, related to other social and educational concepts, such as *guarantees of freedom, self-determination, security and development of individuals, democracy and education towards democracy, social and educational justice, social cohesion and education in a pluralistic and multicultural society*. This idea also applies to various phenomena related to the notions of *unity and difference* (learning to recognise, deconstruct and accept them), assimilation, social exclusion or marginalisation. By definition, the term “social inclusion” is characterised by ambiguity (Ainscow et al., 2006; Dymond et al., 2008). It is most commonly phrased using equality categories as:

- equality of opportunities, access to social and cultural life, participation in decisions that affect a person, ability to make independent choices, assertion of one’s rights, contacts and relationships with other people (Dykcik, 2008); social inclusion concerns various areas of an individual’s life, e.g. economic participation, health, access to services, personal independence and self-determination, education, work, leisure, religion, culture, politics, interaction with society and fulfilment of social roles (Taylor and Room, 2012),
- overcoming social inequality, separation and marginalisation, as well as appreciation of diversity (Broda-Wysocki, 2012; Ziemien, 2012); refers not only to organisational, financial and technical mechanisms that support the fullest possible participation of marginalised social groups in various forms of social life, it concerns the functioning of groups disadvantaged as a result of differences; factors that perpetuate marginalisation may include: cultural capital, including linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Czykwin, 2021), social and economic status (Dolata, 2008), migration context (Harrison, 2019), state of developmental deviation (Gillies, 2007; Krause, 2010; Domagała-Zyśk, 2012; Zamkowska, 2014; Żyta and Ćwirynkało, 2014; Dryżałowska, 2019) or ideology as a form of social consciousness (Giroux and Witkowski, 2010); it then implies the need to support groups at risk of exclusion in numerous areas of life (Huxley et al., 2006).

In relation to the first of the aforementioned contexts of social inclusion: the contemporary challenges of managing diversity and the pursuit of a higher quality of life for all, irrespective of their disability or other characteristics – levelling of living standards and avoidance of social inequalities – are fundamental determi-

nants of *social cohesion*. Thus, social inclusion may be understood as a process of including individuals, groups or social categories – the essence of inclusion is then to strive for the active participation of the individual (to the extent of his or her abilities and potential) in various areas of social life – this may be expressed as an expansion of public space for the real, rather than feigned, implementation of human rights, as a reconstruction of the society's mindset in such a manner that it reflects the diverse identities of its members, provides opportunities to meet a variety of needs and respond flexibly to them (Slee, 2009). The embodiment of social inclusion (identified with the demand for making life more humane in the spirit of social justice) is the recognition of the subjectivity and the right to have a voice of each individual and social group, the implementation of the principles of emancipation, equality and social justice, and the triumph over the division into privileged, dominant and marginalised groups through the inclusion into active social life of as many people as possible. At the same time, with the assumption of a critical stance towards the demands of social justice within the framework of educational discourse, according to Śliwerski (2015), it must be presumed that we are not able to decree universal equality. The sole pursuit of it through the change in the consciousness of individuals and the correction of social mechanisms, as well as the exposure of the subjective, ideological character of knowledge and educational practices, may already be considered meaningful.

To recognise and accept diversity seems to be the best way to create a society that is open to everyone (*an inclusive society, community*). A fundamental principle in a diverse society is not to exclude anyone as “Other” or “Stranger” because of his or her ethnic and cultural affiliation, membership of a religious or sexual minority or living with a disability. As argued by Broda-Wysocki (2012), most often social inclusion is wrongly perceived as a simple inverse, oppositional category to exclusion and implies inclusion, incorporation. This oversimplification is brought about by the programming of inclusion measures “often, whenever possible” and “not strictly in relation to the observed and defined phenomena of exclusion” (pp. 12–13).

A society which displays inclusive behaviour engages in inclusive activities on a personal, communal and cultural level. An inclusive society is characterised by the knowledge and development of the experiences, needs and skills of each of its members. The concept of development according to Horowitz (1998), with its stimulating, enabling learning as well as supportive and cultural functions, belongs in the context of an inclusive environment. In this view, it becomes relevant to create the surrounding environment as a system of enabling stimuli, to adapt the educational offer to the person's capabilities, to strengthen independence, resourcefulness, self-reliance, motivation for lifelong learning as well as social and cultural development.

It is worth noting at this point the peculiar split of the contemporary world between two tendencies: on the one hand, the desire of society to promote freedom,

emancipation and pluralism, and on the other hand, the search for community bonds and consciousness. Today, the idea of social inclusion may be primarily developed with regard to a balance between these contradictory tendencies. This is the only approach that guarantees respect for individuality and the preservation of social cohesion.

The search for an adequate relationship between diversity and a sense of community (...) places human dignity, human freedom and equality at the centre, without losing sight of one point: all challenges demonstrate the need for agreement within society on the formation of principles of coexistence. This applies to support for what is common without calling into question the diversity and richness of different life projects and freedom as such. (Ernst-Milerska, 2022, p. 190)

Thus, an inclusive community creates a space in which social life is characterised by cohesiveness of bonds and shared values and beliefs (Szumski, 2009, 2010), strives to maintain cohesion, and at the same time is sensitive to diversity, respects individuality and personal freedom, and supports emancipation processes. In the inclusion process, the integration of the category of differences into the scope of community takes place – what is different is included in what is common. An aspiration of this kind may be identified as “enabling diversity on the grounds of what is common” (Ernst-Milerska, 2022, p. 193); or the Montessorian “unity in diversity” (Montessori, 2007; Jaroszewska, 2022) or the “upbringing towards diversity without prejudice” (Sipowicz and Pietras, 2017). Diversity rooted in difference stems directly from the contemporary paradigm of subjectivity and individualism, which rejects labelling anyone as the “Other”.

One can speak of inclusion in the latter aspect, if all people are seen and valued in their diversity, with their abilities and habits. However, the essence of social inclusion cannot create a special focus on only selected individuals, as it creates divisions, but what is necessary is a change of attitude towards the group, as this is what prevents social exclusion (Jerg, 2013). Inclusion is a deliberate remedial process against perceived and, unfortunately, increasing social inequalities in the modern world by creating opportunities and possibilities to fulfil developmental tasks which correspond to different stages of life (Bąbka, 2019), to obtain the resources needed to function in social life (Szatur-Jaworowska, 2005). “Separation should be overcome, social participation in an equal manner should be guaranteed to all individuals, and diversity should be appreciated” (Ernst-Milerska, 2022, p. 189).

For years, special education has been perceived as an area of equal opportunities, and education as one of the most effective emancipatory tools for bridging social inequalities. In the current trend of inclusive education, it is not only the evolution of the approach to disability that is visible (I will develop this topic later), but also the interweaving of numerous other social discourses concerning the broadly understood axis problem of exclusion-inclusion (Podgórska-Jachnik,

2016). Contemporary thought about people with developmental differences and their place in the world includes the assumptions of the leading paradigms in special education: the normalisation and emancipation paradigms (Krause, 2010; Chrzanowska, 2015). The emancipatory paradigm raises the aspect of subjectivity and the exertion of influence over reality on the part of people with disabilities themselves, and involves an attempt to liberate them from the limitations that society has attributed to them for decades, considering them as dependent individuals, in need of care and assistance, “eternal child”. The normalisation paradigm justifies actions intended to increase the access to all areas of social life, enabling (ultimately) the fullest possible social participation and the creation of pro-inclusive living conditions in terms of the right to live, opportunities to start a family, education, employment, income, adaptation of the environment, communication, leisure, independent living (Barnes and Mercer, 2008; Chodkowska and Szabała, 2012; Podgórska-Jachnik, 2016). A feasible example of an effective emancipatory-normalising discourse is, for example, the absorption of the notion of *disability* by the notion of *special educational needs*, which includes more categories of students, which will be discussed later. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the proclamation of inclusion, in which acceptance of diversity would mean disregarding the distinctiveness of developmentally different people, and the proposed support would exclude individualisation of the programme, methods, organisational forms tailored to the resources and individual limitations of special educational needs pupils, which would undermine the sense of special needs education. Wocken (2009) argues similarly: to simply allow disadvantaged groups to have access to education in a mainstream school, to have pupils in an inclusive system function side by side with others in some way is not enough to counteract their exclusion, at most it falls under the illusion of a policy of inclusion, under the utopia of the policy of equality. One can see here a reference to the assumptions of critical pedagogy, which suggests that inclusion education should be seen as a type of intervention in the socialisation process. This approach promotes the development of individuals, taking into account their diversity, and the creation of an inclusive society. School and education are part of a social and political process which serves to build a space where differences are not ignored, but rather accepted and negotiated. The differences that emerge between students in the educational process are not to be overlooked or merely tolerated, but rather meant to provide a starting point for dialogue, negotiation, and change in the conditions that enable equality of life opportunities for the young generation. Inclusive education, therefore, meets the conditions for social intervention (Szkudlarek, 2003, 2015; Giroux and Witkowski, 2010; Speck, 2013; Kweciński, 2014), “in individual and social terms fosters the affirmation of human diversity” (Bąbka and Korzeniowska, 2020, p. 51). Inclusive education should teach the students that differences are the starting point for dialogue, negotiation, collabora-

tive learning and changing conditions that enable equality of life chances and the experience of unity in diversity.

In accordance with the assumptions of contemporary paradigms, as well as the ideas of normalisation and social inclusion, the social environment should ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to fulfil their developmental tasks. However, in the opinion of Gindrich (2017), one can only speak of inclusion when people with disabilities are not only free from being marginalised and discriminated against, but when their independence and their own agency are emphasised and when they are involved in cooperation and treated as partners. Consequently, what constitutes the essence of social inclusion for these individuals, understood as full assimilation, is full recognition of their rights and their participation in society to the fullest extent possible. A visible manifestation of the emancipation of persons with disabilities is their pursuit of autonomy, expressed in the recognition of their rights, the possibility to make choices and take responsibility for them, to create their own representations and to form associations at different levels of the organisation of social life. It is a set of necessary and positive actions associated with civic engagement (Broda-Wysocki, 2012). The activism, self-advocacy and civic engagement of people with disabilities is undoubtedly linked to a steady increase in their social capital, to which education also makes a major contribution. The increasing awareness of people with disabilities and the institutions set up for this purpose are intended to foster the enforcement of rights. Social inclusion is supported by technological, prosthetic or communication solutions (the latter – in the aspect of communication and mobility of people), which are part of the modern age, as well as the management of common space, consistent with the new concept of its management, which nowadays takes the form of the so-called universal design, taking into account the needs and limitations of different people (Podgórska-Jachnik, 2016).

Social inclusion cannot be analysed in isolation from a specific local community, united by culture, traditions, attachment, neighbourhood, local nature. It is in the local environment that the identity of individuals and social groups is formed, direct interactions take place, through which interpersonal bonds as well as social and professional activity are formed, which also refers to those at risk of exclusion. The social inclusion of the excluded can only take place in an open community (Feuser, 2012), which, through activation, strengthens their empowerment, sense of agency and commitment to cooperation. An open social environment provides people with disabilities the opportunity to “pursue developmental tasks, function in the larger community and feel a sense of belonging to it” (Głodkowska, 2009, p. 6). Rather than declaring measures of social inclusion, it provides actual assistance which also takes into account their views and opinions, therefore, making social support a significant element in the inclusion of such people in the life of the local community.

What is substantial at the foundation of reflections on the nature of social inclusion, is an attempt to define the *inclusive culture* and its implementation in the learning environment. Social inclusion is a significant part of the social culture of every individual. In the plan for a change of consciousness on the understanding of diversity, community and education, the upbringing of a person in the spirit of forming an inclusive sensibility becomes the key to an inclusive social transformation and a participatory model of social life. The culture of inclusion is expressed in the acceptance and implementation of values such as equality, social solidarity or respect for the right to diversity. In an inclusive culture, the cornerstone of pursuit is mutual knowledge and understanding, which presupposes the discovery of one's own potential and the ones of others, thus creating a new differentiated personal and collective quality. It cannot simply be mandated or imposed (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2018). It is necessary to nurture the development of an inclusive culture in local environments and to build a support network on values which promote diversity and inclusion. An inclusive culture of the local environment is also a vital element in the implementation of inclusive education. Education must be a common good, open to differences. The culture of inclusive education is founded on diversity, values and social justice, in contrast to the traditional culture of integrative education, which is founded on disability and desegregation focused on the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education (Gajdzica and Mrózek, 2017). It forms the foundation for the establishment of an organisation of the local education system for students with disabilities as well as organisational and methodological solutions within each preschool and school. Therefore, an essential part of the issue of inclusive education that has been addressed is also to raise public awareness of the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities. A truly inclusive environment must continue its efforts to make the school culture more inclusive and fair for all (Speck, 2013; Sahlberg, 2021). The creation and maintenance of an inclusive school culture proceeds in a long-term manner from within the school, in conjunction with the ongoing social and cultural changes as well as involvement of all school members. A reference to the preparation and implementation process of an inclusive school culture is Thomas and Loxley's (2007) concept describing the deconstruction of special education and the construction of inclusive education.

Various typologies of school culture are present in the relevant literature, yet taking into account the objectives of the present text – the context of an inclusive school culture – the approach of Czerepaniak-Walczak (2018) was adopted as the foundation, which assumes openness to a variety of forms of otherness, with the following distinctions: 1) closed/occlusive culture – which appropriates external patterns and modifies them according to its criteria, 2) elite/exclusive culture – which excludes “Others” (those who do not fit in with us, who deviate from the commonly accepted norm, who are different in terms of nationality, ethnicity, reli-



gion, belief or development), and 3) mass/inclusive culture – culture for everyone, for “Others”. In an inclusion-oriented school culture, the participant of the educational process holds a special role, teaching and learning activities are personalised, differences in the experiences, specific needs and aspirations of learners are taken into account. The learning process takes place in various ways and at a different pace (Dernowska and Markowska-Manista, 2022). The concept of an inclusive school culture points to the need for a multifaceted openness to diversity, including openness to the “new” needs of learners that arise from current situations as well as the continuously changing reality. An inclusive school culture embedded in the discourse of inclusion becomes a significant stimulus for the formation of an inclusive social culture and includes matters of inequality of educational opportunity, gender, poverty, ethnicity, nationality, religion, special educational needs, mental health, disability. “Collaboration in inclusive education creates a space in which the diversity of the group provides a pretext for students to get to know each other better in terms of strengths and weaknesses, to become sensitive to the dissimilarity of others, to accept the differences, to learn dialogue and the art of conflict resolution” (Bąbka and Korzeniowska, 2020, p. 56). The result of working towards a culture of inclusion is also acceptance of all children, i.e. embracing them as they are. Without acceptance, a barrier is created between the educator and the educated, which prevents the development of bonds and trust and hinders proper cooperation. An inclusive community becomes a place of experience, encounter, empathy and equal dialogue. Therefore, in the process of transformation of a mainstream school into a school that changes, seeks alternative solutions and builds the culture within it on all-human values, the education and individual development of all its members is of particular value (Armstrong, 2011).

The idea of inclusive education understood as an educational model is identified with a critique of the theory and practice of segregated education or synonymous with integrative education. At times, it is also referred to as the quality of non-segregated education for people with disabilities or seen as synonymous with education (an education system which takes into consideration and adapts to the great diversity of children; aiming to adequately meet the needs of all students). The latter approach amounts to creation of a community with specific characteristics around the school (Szumski, 2010, 2019; Göransson and Nilholm, 2014). Thus, inclusive education is not a unified theoretical and practical concept. The glue that binds together the different ways of understanding it is the acceptance of the assumption that it is about any form of shared learning among developmentally diverse students.

The tendency in inclusive education is to depart from the idea and practice of including only pupils with disabilities in mainstream education and move towards the inclusion of a wider group of children and young people with so-called *special educational needs*. The source of these needs may be not only the limitations of

students caused by disorders, deficits in their state of health and development, but also difficulties in learning, social adaptation, various types of crisis situations, migration, being part of national or ethnic minorities, as well as special talents. Whereby, the approach currently encouraged is that the awareness of the existence of these characteristics, understood as individual resources of each student, not necessarily accurately labelled as “special”, generates the need to recognise that all students have special developmental and educational needs (an approach shift: *from special educational needs to individual educational needs*). It implies a departure from a narrow perspective of special needs as a problem of individual students and an acceptance of the broader concept of the improvement of the mainstream school and the creation of a cultural climate which enables it to respond more flexibly to the needs of all children of the community (Ainscow et al., 2006; Lechta, 2010). In accordance with the aforementioned philosophy of inclusive education, unconditional acceptance of the special needs of all children is emphasised, which consequently implies the need for comprehensive adaptation of the school environment (universal design of spaces, educational services, messages). A profound respect for the diversity and individuality of each pupil is thereby expressed. Distinctiveness becomes, under such conditions, a wealth for the whole school community. An inclusive system accepts that diversity is normal and therefore inclusion becomes a given. The principle of homogeneity no longer prevails, on the contrary, the principle of heterogeneity is applied, through which the general school teacher is not obliged anymore to achieve the same standard of education with all pupils. The diversity of students is seen as a value, a kind of resource to support learning, through which the entire school environment can evolve. Pupil diversity therefore becomes a factor in favour of education. The promotion of this type of orientation is understood as the provision of access to *high quality education* for all pupils capable of following the general education curriculum.

The concept of inclusive education understood as an educational path is therefore characterised by a set of shared features: access to school for all students, balanced educational goals that take into account harmonious development of students, flexible support system of professionals who cooperate, and a shared educational programme (Szumski, 2019). Such postulates emphasise the role and the relevance of implementation of the normalisation model as a foundation for inclusive education and for stimulating the development of the child with diverse development (Krause, 2010). The normalisation strategy entails that the disability of the student is noticed and taken into account in the implementation of the teaching process, but does not constitute a barrier to the performance of tasks arising from the role of the student. The promotion of diversity, respect for the distinctiveness of each individual by modern societies is compatible with the creation of conditions conducive to their individual and social development. With regard to developmentally different pupils, distinctiveness is only one of

the elements, which are understood as individual human resources, whose characteristics should result in the creation of appropriate organisational solutions and teaching strategies for education. If misunderstood, they may hinder school education, just as any other personal and environmental conditions of a heterogeneous group of students may potentially constitute an educational barrier. The inclusion in mainstream educational institutions, viewed in accordance with the normalisation paradigm, becomes a fundamental starting point for setting conditions for the educational process. It leads to the creation of the same functioning conditions for the beneficiaries of this process as for those with typical development. In this sense, inclusive education is founded on a philosophy of acceptance of the diverse abilities of students and the creation of appropriate conditions for them in the educational environment.

The commitment to follow the guidelines of social justice and the application of education grounded in human rights requires a broader educational policy which incorporates the principles of inclusion. Inclusive education grew out of the belief that restricting access to a universal, common school for all is discriminatory in nature and contradicts social justice. This view was echoed in a number of international legal documents, e.g. the UN Convention on Inclusion (2006), which recognises the broadest category of understanding of child population, accepting diversity on the basis of, *inter alia*, physical ability, replacing the previous quality of categorising and labelling children by naming disabilities. Understood in this manner, disability (similarly like outstanding abilities, religious belief, cultural affiliation) cannot be treated as a specific property of the individual. Adopting the assumption that is not individual limitations, but external obstacles that hinder a person's participation in life, that make him or her not fully able, required finding a new definition of the concept of disability, now understood as "a multidimensional phenomenon resulting from interactions between people and their physical and social environment" (World Health Organization, 2001). The approach proposed by the biopsychosocial model of disability (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)), portrays it as a common feature of the human condition, a certain state which, as a continuum in varying degrees of severity, is relevant in the life of every human being, and not just an isolated group traditionally considered disabled. It is a universal human experience of limitation, mainly for environmental reasons, of personal activity or participation in social life, including limitation of one's rights. In this respect, disability is seen as a normal aspect of human life and defined in the context of human rights. In order to guarantee the full range of rights to people with disabilities, it is necessary to counteract discrimination against them and to create compensatory mechanisms and conditions for the exercise of their claims. A natural consequence of this approach is therefore to strive to transform the physical and social environment (created for people without disabilities) in such a manner that it can also be freely enjoyed by

people with atypical development. The fulfilment of this postulate is to be achieved through the elimination of all barriers (social, architectural, urban, legal, communicative, welfare) present in this environment.

Both the UN Convention and subsequent European documents on inclusive education emphasise the idea of equal opportunities. Inclusive education thus becomes education for strengthening the potential and rights of vulnerable people (compensatory, restorative justice). The mentioned legal regulations foster the creation of an inclusive society, they also emphasise the establishment of formal legal regulations and real mechanisms for equality. This approach may be called an inclusion policy. This policy naturally has its accompanying educational dimension as well.

### SUMMARY

The topics of inclusion, community, culture and inclusive education, as well as diversity and difference (stemming from individual and developmental needs) were considered throughout the above discussions as interrelated phenomena. According to Szkudlarek (2015, p. 54), inclusion is the pursuit of not only the “idea of equal opportunities” and education for diversity, which appear only on the surface as alternatives, since “difference is always part of some politics of equality, just as the politics of equality is always entangled in somehow understood or projected understandings of difference”. By definition, inclusion in this approach is not the same as equalisation (Rosanvallon, 2013), it does not presuppose an idealistic uniformity, rather it is an action rooted in reciprocity, supporting a community-building approach that is only possible under the assumption of a common pursuit, a collaboration (a negation of competition). The idea of inclusion and of an inclusive society, in which disadvantaged groups are provided with increased opportunities for social participation and the possibility of enjoying a dignified life, due to the difference, is an ever more authentic vision of the practical possibilities of its implementation and legitimacy. According to Kwieciński (2014, p. 177), “inclusion is a moral imperative, a political principle, a good quality of public discourse, openness to differences, equal treatment of all dissimilarities, the removal of barriers, a negative response to the language of aggression and the stigmatisation of otherness”. As a science, education should inspire constructive change.

No one and nothing can free us, educators, from pointing to educational institutions as the ones obliged to ensure that everyone, every person – regardless of his or her distinctiveness – has the key competences to access symbolic culture, which are necessary to create an autonomous path of successful living. (Kwieciński, 2014, p. 177)

The question of how to implement an inclusive culture in education requires a separate study. It is fundamental that, already in the educational process, pupils are enabled to discover the “Other”, in an engaged collaboration, in a shared accumulation of experiences, functioning in community on the basis of unity in diversity. In this context, collaborative education is one strategy that supports the students in developing the cognitive and social competences necessary to function in the community, as well as fosters the promotion of values that enable the construction of an inclusive society.

## CONCLUSIONS

Inclusion, understood as removal of social inequalities, enables those marginalised and excluded by dissimilarity to increase their opportunities for active participation within society. In the context of educational philosophy, it creates a broad cognitive perspective which provides an appreciation of diversity as a category of high priority for special education. Special education is an area of equal opportunities, and inclusive education is one of the most effective emancipatory tools for bridging social inequalities. Inclusive education reveals itself as a space for transformation (inclusive education which meets the conditions for social intervention), where the world may be negotiated, reconstructed, and the approach to equality and difference ceases to divide and becomes a necessary imperative (Haas and Treber, 2009; Bąbka and Nowicka, 2019). Its foundation is an inclusive school culture based on commonality, respect, equality and recognition of diversity as a value.

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## IDEA INKLUZJI JAKO FILOZOFII EDUKACJI – KONTEKSTY ISTOTNE DLA PEDAGOGIKI SPECJALNEJ

**Wprowadzenie:** Inkluzję społeczną najczęściej ujmuje się w kategoriach równościowych w znaczeniu równego dostępu do różnego rodzaju zasobów oraz możliwości udziału w interakcjach i wypełnianiu ról społecznych. W takim wymiarze inkluzja społeczna polega na przeciwdziałaniu nierówności społecznej, separacji oraz marginalizacji, przy jednoczesnym docenianiu różnorodności. Fenomen inkluzji, pojmowanej w kontekście edukacji włączającej w ujęciu pedagogiki specjalnej oznacza włączanie kategorii różnic w zakres wspólnotowości – różnorodność jest uwzględniana w tym, co wspólne.

**Cel badań:** Problem badawczy koncentruje się na próbie odpowiedzi na pytanie, czym jest idea inkluzji społecznej jako filozofia edukacji, z jakimi podstawowymi kategoriami pojęciowymi, kluczowymi dla dyskutowanego zagadnienia koresponduje oraz jak ta idea koncepcyjnie wpisuje się w obszar zainteresowań pedagogiki specjalnej. Celem poznawczym badań była eksploracja znaczenia inkluzji rozumianej jako wyrównywanie nierówności społecznych, zwiększanie grupom defaworyzowanym wskutek różnicy szans na społeczną partycypację oraz możliwość godnego życia, a także docenianie różnorodności jako kategorii priorytetowej dla edukacji specjalnej.

**Stan wiedzy:** Tematem przewodnim jest refleksja nad znaczeniem inkluzji społecznej, wspólnoty włączającej i kultury inkluzyjnej, różnorodności i różnicy w odniesieniu do filozofii edukacji i środowiska uczenia się. Zasadniczy kontekst dyskusji sprowadza się do analizy głównych kategorii pojęciowych i transmisji idei inkluzji w przestrzeni paradygmatyczną pedagogiki specjalnej.

**Podsumowanie:** Pedagogika specjalna jest obszarem wyrównywania szans, a edukacja włączająca jest jednym z najskuteczniejszych narzędzi emancypacyjnych, niwelujących nierówności społeczne. Edukacja inkluzyjna postrzegana jest jako przestrzeń zmiany, w której coraz pełniej uwierzytelnia się wizja praktycznych możliwości realizacji i legitymizacji idei inkluzji społecznej. Jej podstawę stanowi inkluzyjna kultura szkoły ukonstytuowana na wspólnotowości, szacunku, równości, uznaniu różnorodności jako wartości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** inkluzja społeczna, filozofia edukacji, wspólnota włączająca, kultura inkluzyjna, różnorodność, pedagogika specjalna