

Attention to Diversity in the Formation of Future Teachers: Forming in Inclusion from Higher Education

Luis Espino-Díaz ^{1*}, Gemma Fernández-Caminero ¹

¹ Universidad de Córdoba, Córdoba, SPAIN

* CORRESPONDENCE: ✉ luis.espino@uco.es

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the importance of applying attention to diversity in the school context as a means of inclusion. For this purpose, it analyzes the training needs of the teaching staff by detecting the elements that should be strengthened, as well as the criteria to be taken into account and the elements to be included in a training plan to be applied in the field of Higher Education, specifically in the curricula for future teachers. Subsequently, the authors make a proposal of contents of a learning program in attention to diversity for teachers in training describing the process of development of the training proposal.

Keywords: attention to diversity, inclusion, higher education, teacher training, social responsibility, educational guidelines

INTRODUCTION

Attention to diversity is an educational principle that serves as a guide to respond to the individual differences of students through certain measures of adjustment of the different elements of the curriculum. It has been conceived from very different theoretical approaches: from the emphasis on the diversity of students as a result of differences in capacity of different kinds, to the emphasis on the diversity of students as a result of different cultural origins (Cejudo et al., 2016).

In the present paper an issue of special relevance in the educational field is addressed. Society is increasingly heterogeneous in its cultural, ethnic, linguistic, class, gender, capacity. The migratory phenomenon is another factor to be taken into account. One of the features that characterizes 21st century society is religious and cultural diversity as a consequence, in part, of the migratory phenomenon (García & Martínez, 2016). The presence of minority groups with their corresponding cultural and religious perspectives, of students with special educational needs, or who come from families with serious social and economic problems, etc. it constitutes a reality that is not irrelevant to what happens in schools.

In this sense, the school, as an agent of socialization, must respond to the needs demanded by society. This research is based on the deficit of attention to diversity that exists in the educational field. For what it is necessary, among other elements, a training of excellence in the teaching professionals.

For this reason, the research will start from strategies in the implementation of programs and projects in the initial formation of the curricula of future teachers in the levels of Higher Education oriented towards a greater competence in attention to diversity.

Article History: Received 19 August 2017 ♦ Revised 24 January 2018 ♦ Accepted 10 February 2018

© 2018 The Author(s). Open Access terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) apply. The license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, on the condition that users give exact credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if they made any changes.

Attention to Diversity as a Means of Social Inclusion

The new demands faced by educational centers, in terms of the attention of an increasingly diverse student body, are another reason for the incorporation of new responsibilities in the tasks of educational professionals (Alonso, Castedo & Varela, 2016). Given the aforementioned diversity, the educational community must unite efforts that provide adequate responses to individual differences, combining equity, through fair and non-discriminatory treatment for each and every one of its students, and quality, offering the maximum possible efficacy in the results (González, 2013).

Therefore, the educational model must be oriented towards the search for equal opportunities, respect and the appreciation of differences, all of which constitutes a quality educational system that advocates for a comprehensive school that responds to the characteristics and needs of all the students, so that it reaches the same level of learning (Silva, 2007).

When we speak of inclusive school, the importance of the conditions and capacities of the school organization that make inclusion possible is accentuated. This does not only refer to the classroom, nor is it the result of individual actions; it is the center as a whole that has to articulate coherent and global responses to the challenges represented by diversity (González, 2008).

Several researches support that the implementation of inclusive programs focused on attention to diversity promotes in the students more positive perceptions and attitudes regarding the inclusion in the school and the classroom (Siperstein et al., 2017; Leigers & Myers, 2015; Martinez et al., 2016). Also, participation in different activities has powerful effects on students' perceptions of their school's inclusive environment and their attitudes towards inclusion in the classroom. These findings support an ecological approach to social inclusion and structured school-wide interventions integrated within normative school contexts.

On the other hand, and as a central aspect of our review, the training of teachers in attention to diversity and its development is essential for the achievement of an inclusive school and educational system (Pilgrim et al., 2017; Pilgrim & Hornby, 2016). That is why, from now on, we will focus on the training of future teachers.

Training Needs in the Field of Attention to Diversity in Future Teachers: Criteria to Be Taken into Account and Elements to Be Included

In this section an analysis focused on detecting where the training needs are located in the curricula of future teachers will be addressed, that is, it is about the curricular planning existing at the Higher Education level. In this sense, it is of special relevance to place the emphasis on the future teacher developing favorable attitudes towards the diversity of students, being able to seek, reflect and agree, with other educational and social agents, alternatives to act in response to educational needs. and to develop to the maximum the capacities of the student body in equal opportunities (Colmenero & Pegalajar, 2015).

In this sense, the university students have expressed their attitude of acceptance towards different people, coming to consider it as a stimulus for their professional development. Also, Sanhueza, Granada and Bravo (2012) analyze teacher attitudes towards inclusive education, highlighting a positive attitude and incorporating different measures to meet the educational needs of students.

Based on this assimilationist condition, intrinsic to the teaching profession, training in attention to diversity must revolve around the following criteria (Colmenero & Pegalajar, 2015):

- Pedagogy of complexity: based on the multidimensional nature that characterizes the problem of educational nature.
- Constructivist perspectives: since the learning processes of the students to consider from the diversity are based on the same theories as the rest of the students.
- Integrated development: that takes into account a holistic approach to human development, as well as contributions such as multiple intelligences, self-esteem, etc.
- Adaptive teaching: that considers the principle of individualization adapting the curricular elements to the personal characteristics of the students.
- Curricular adaptations: as a result of a contextual psychopedagogical evaluation.
- Network of supports and collaborations: classrooms and centers must promote aid and cooperative work among students, teachers, families and the community.

Contents of a Learning Program in Attention to Diversity for Teachers in Training: A Training Proposal in Higher Education

From the approach that we have just presented, some essential elements are derived for the initial teacher training:

- Acceptance of all students as their own.
- Classroom and ordinary center as a preferred space of attention.
- Knowledge about student differences.
- Mastery of curricular decisions and methodologies that facilitate the highest degree of participation and learning
- Acquisition of skills in the use of different techniques based on the ability of students as peer tutoring or learning
- cooperative with other teachers, as well as the inclusion of the educational community.
- Knowledge of the action procedures of support professionals.
- Acting as researchers of their practice so that from the reflection professional development can take place (investigation-action).

Phases in the Process of Training in Attention to Diversity

Taking into account the work contributed by Correa, Sierra & Alzate (2015) we propose the following phases in the process of training students of the degrees that give access to teaching.

A first stage of contextualization, whose purpose is to develop actions for planning the process, raising awareness and training communities against the inclusion approach. In this phase, the design of the methodology to be used will also be included, as well as the tools of the training program for the characterization of the population.

The second stage is stabilization, focused on the review, design and implementation of improvement plans, articulating the quality and inclusion of the entire community.

The third is to deepen and includes monitoring the development of institutional improvement plans and the evaluation of the transformation process in the inclusive education program in educational institutions.

For the implementation of a program we propose workshops organized in three moments along the lines described by Correa, Sierra & Alzate (2015):

- Awareness-raising: a moment aimed at raising awareness of attitudes among the participating undergraduates, inviting them to reflect on the actions that are carried out around the attention of diversity in order to identify successes and errors of the teaching practice fundamentally.
- Conceptualization: moment oriented towards the theoretical foundation of the program and through reflection, establish a common language among the educational community and define the concepts that underlie attention to diversity.
- Support to the development of the program: in this last moment of the planning of the training it is possible to include strategies oriented to the sensitization of leadership as an essential element in the putting in practice of own performances of the attention to the diversity.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Inclusive education is considered one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Given that inclusion affects the entire education system, it is necessary to make political and social decisions that make it possible to “change and modify contents, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common approach that includes all children of the corresponding age group. and with the conviction that it is the responsibility of the general system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2005; Durán & Climent, 2017).

As has been evident throughout this paper, teacher training is essential to develop programs aimed at the performance of attention to diversity in the classroom. From this approach, it is necessary to reinforce contents from Higher Education, specifically in the curricula of future teachers. In this sense, there is an association between the level of emotional intelligence of teachers and their assessment of the importance of the need for training in attention to diversity (Cejudo et al., 2016).

On the other hand, the results support the convenience of the initial and permanent teacher training incorporating training in socio-emotional skills and attention to diversity in a combined way (Cejudo et al.,

2016). The proposal of contents that we have presented incorporates and prioritizes precisely the convenience of assimilation type starting positions, while the teacher's sensitization that intends to approach the educational act from the attention to the diversity is a priority element.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The study reported in this paper was supported by the Spain's Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Competitiveness (grant number EDU2017-82862-R)

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Luis Espino-Díaz – Universidad de Córdoba, Córdoba, SPAIN

Gemma Fernández-Caminero – Universidad de Córdoba, Córdoba, SPAIN

REFERENCES

- Alonso, J., Castedo, A. & Varela, E. (2016). Atención a la diversidad en la educación secundaria obligatoria: Análisis desde la inspección educativa. *Aula Abierta*, 44(2), 70-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aula.2016.03.002>
- Cejudo, J., Díaz, M., Losada, L. & Pérez-González, J. (2016). Necesidades de formación de maestros de infantil y primaria en atención a la diversidad. *Bordón*, 68(3), 23-39. <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2016.68402>
- Colmenero, R. & Pegalajar, P. (2015). Cuestionario para futuros docentes de Educación Secundaria acerca de las percepciones sobre atención a la diversidad: construcción y validación del instrumento. *Estudios sobre Educación*, 29, 165-189. <https://doi.org/10.15581/004.29.165-189>
- Correa, J., Sierra, M. & Alzate, G. (2015). Formación de docentes participantes en el programa de educación inclusiva con calidad en Colombia. *Revista latinoamericana de educación inclusiva*, 9(1), 43-61.
- Durán Gisbert, D., & Climent, G. G. (2017). *La formación del profesorado para la educación inclusiva: Un proceso de desarrollo profesional y de mejora de los centros para atender la diversidad*. URI: <http://repositoriocdpd.net:8080/handle/123456789/1913>
- García, R. & Martínez M. (2016). Inmigración, mediación intercultural y diálogo interreligioso: Lecturas comparadas desde la educación. *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, 27, 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.5944/reec.27.2016.15660>
- González, M. (2008). Diversidad e inclusión educativa: algunas reflexiones sobre el liderazgo en el centro escolar. *Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*, 6(2), 82-99.
- González, D. (2013). La atención a la diversidad en la LOMCE. En C. Marchena (Ed.), *La LOMCE. Claves para el profesorado* (pp. 99–122). Madrid: Editorial Anaya.
- Leigers, K. & Myers, C. (2015). Effect of duration of peer awareness education on attitudes toward students with disabilities: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools & Early Intervention*, 8(1), 79-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19411243.2015.1021067>
- Martinez, A., Coker, C., McMahon, S., Cohen, J. & Thapa, A. (2016). Involvement in extracurricular activities: Identifying differences in perceptions of school climate. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 70-84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.7>
- Pilgrim, M. & Hornby, G. (2016). Preparing teachers for special and inclusive education: Applicability of a model developed in New Zealand to the English speaking Caribbean. *Journal of Education and Training*, 3(1), 176-188. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jet.v3i1.8963>
- Pilgrim, M., Hornby, G., Everatt, J. & Macfarlane, A. (2017). Evaluation of an innovative programme for training teachers of children with learning and behavioural difficulties in New Zealand. *Educational Review*, 69(3), 337-348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1218443>
- Sanhueza, S., Granada, M. & Bravo, L. (2012). Chilean and Costa Rica teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education. *Cuadernos de pesquisa*, 42(146), 884-899.

Silva, S. (2007). *Atención a la diversidad. Necesidades educativas: guía de actuación para docentes*. España: Ideas propias Editorial.

Siperstein, G., Summerill, L., Jacobs, H. & Stokes, J. (2017). Promoting Social Inclusion in High Schools Using a Schoolwide Approach. *Inclusion*, 5(3), 173-188. <https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-5.3.173>

UNESCO (2005). *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*. París: UNESCO.

