Inclusion: Something More Than Sitting Together [1]

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Abstract

Awareness about students with learning difficulty brought us to inclusive learning environments. The acceptance was to build collaborative atmospheres in the class. Unfortunately, when teachers are not enthusiastic and adequate to develop the interaction, the inclusive learning environment never occurs. This conclusion bases on this studies analysis taken from interviews with two physics teachers and three blind students who had taken physics course. Assessment process, lecturing methods and used materials which the teachers explained are not appropriate for blind students, so they cannot obtain a chance to participate the physics course. On the other hand, the blind students also not sinless; according to the interview records form a formally inclusive assigned school in Ankara, the blind students feel not ready to include the class. Additionally they confess that inclusive learning environment seems more difficult; they prefer basic designed exams and just sitting in the class to participate a real inclusive environment.

[1] This study was presented with the same name in The International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE-2011) conference was held on July 6-9 in Istanbul-Turkey.

Introduction

Everyone agree that students with special needs should be learn in equal conditions, however there is an hot topic for debate about how it is take to place (Keefe & Davis, 1998). There are some the types of integration (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2005); full, selective and no integration. Full integration has some advantages according to others. For example, it is more realistic setting which involves learning to accept peers with differences (Morris, 2000). Selective integration is partial integration and there are no students which attends the class selectively out of the students with special needs. This discrimination may occur with all types of integration except full integration. On the other hand, full integration is only a part in the concept of inclusion.

Inclusion is not an event; it is a process. There are also levels of inclusion and from inclusion to exclusion the learning environment should not be defined as black or white (Figure 1). Additionally, one perspective is not enough to decide that there is an inclusive learning environment in that class or not. Students and teachers' prospects may be different (Fraser, 2007). There should be 360 degree research about the class's learning environment. The term "360 degree research" means that multi-sources from different perspectives about learning environment (Parry, 1998). The components on inclusive class are more than teacher and students. Comments from families, administer of school and also teacher of guidance may complete decision about whether there is an inclusive learning environment. Alpha press is used to express the environment as observed by an external observer. The perception scores obtained from individual students (private beta press) or the average of environment scores of all students within the same class (consensual beta press) are important for researchers (Fraser, 1998).

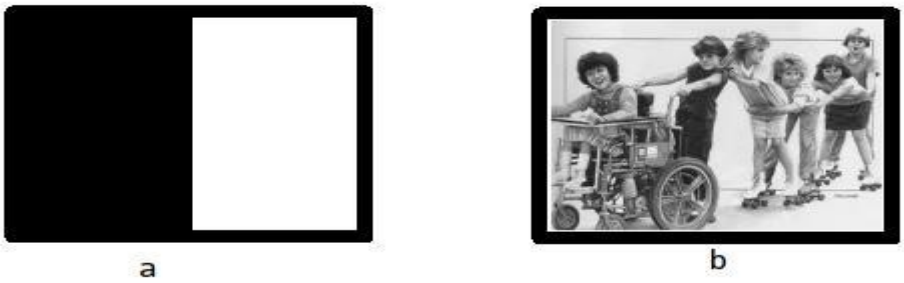

Figure 1. Different types of inclusion with black and white

In the first view of the figure 1, how do a person describe “a” and “b”? Probably, for “a” the description will be about colors; black and white. This position of colors lets discrimination, however, although “b” is colorless picture, no one describe as “black and white”. Inclusive is similar to this example; being together for a goal changes the structure. The purpose of an inclusive class should be to create a meaningful work together.

Learning environment

Learning environment is something more than furniture used in the class; it involves type of interaction or climate of class. About the relationship between students’ achievement and the quality of the classroom learning environment, teachers should not feel that it is a waste of time and energy to improving their classroom environment (Fraser, 2007). However, there is a meta-analysis study involving 823 classes and 17,805 students. According to this study, better achievement on a variety of outcome measures was found consistently in classes perceived as having greater Satisfaction, Cohesiveness and Goal Direction and less Disorganization and Friction (Fraser, 1998). These features of classroom climate are not adequate for inclusive learning environment. Equality in instruction method, material and assessment, awareness of

friends/student's special needs and support in each other are other important factors. All these factors may combine in one observable dimension; it is collaboration!

With collaboration, all students may feel active participate and with the help of defined role on the work may let a meaningful learning due to the goal directed approach. This collaboration makes more connections and increase the communication in class, so after finishing the work together sense of belonging improves. All members of team are evaluated according to the team work.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is collaboration in formally inclusive schools. New curricula and innovations should include classroom environment instruments to provide economical, reliable and valid process measures of effectiveness (Fraser, 2007), so the other purpose was to define components of inclusive learning environment.

Methodology

In Ankara, capital of Turkey, a school which is formally inclusive was chosen randomly. There are two huge schools for students with special needs but other schools may sometimes become an inclusive school if the students want to go. The question asked in the interview was adapted from students to teachers and administer of school, guidance teachers and families. Interview with families is done with mobile phone due to their work. The main question is given below.

Main question: Would you give me an example about collaboration in your physics class?

There were four physics teachers but two of them are usually do instruction in inclusive classes. It is a rule in that school that there must be only one blind student in each class. From six students, only three of them admit to interview.

Results

Unfortunately, all the components of inclusive class agreed that they cannot give any collaboration example. The blind students also not sinless because in that system they do not need to study hard and interact with class members. Memorizing the terms in physics and sitting in the class, attendance is enough to pass the course. Additionally they confess that inclusive learning environment seems more difficult; they prefer basic designed exams and just sitting in the class to participate a real inclusive environment. Other findings are given in table 2.

Table 1. Some comments about main question.

Blind students	**Physics teachers**	**Families**	**Administration**	**Guidance**
We have different examination paper (lack of equality).	They only take physics course in 9th grade, so we make ease for blinds like asking definitions (lack of equality). We have no chance to be interested in blind students due to the crowded class (lack of awareness).	They may use their recorder to listen again.	One student had come and asked why they not solve problems, because in university entrance examination they have to solve problems (lack of support).	In crowded class blind students also have problem about noisy (lack of participation). Out of the class all blind students walk and talk with their own group (lack of collaboration).

Conclusion

Inclusive learning environment is a combination of equality of students, awareness of special needs, participation of students with special needs, helpful and friendly environment (support) and collaboration. Collaboration is container concept and lets us to observe whether there is an inclusive learning environment. It may be an ideal condition but inclusive learning environment should be defined different from sitting together. This observable definition should be expanded with equality of students, awareness of special needs, participation of students with special needs, helpful and friendly environment (support) and collaboration. Like this case, there may be no problem due to the easy passing system and it is hard to build a real inclusive environment; however, inclusive classes are not necessary only for achievement but also for their educational rights.

It is possible to construct a collaborative learning environment in virtual world (Bulbul & Sahyun, 2010). The researchers designed a distance experiment via web. In real world and in the same class, giving responsibilities, roles and posing problems which will solve in collaborative environment is not hard to do than the previous one.

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