

Equity, Society and Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Head Teacher Interviews in the US and the Netherlands

JiYoung SEO-CENSE
(Tochigi Teachers Association)

KEY WORDS: Equity, diversity and inclusive education

1. Objectives of this study

Most schools are organized by the government as it manages the national curriculum, teacher training, educational programs and so on. So it is not difficult to see a reflection of the government's beliefs in our society and life. Additionally, local governments want to manage the educational system and inject their government policy thinking into schools. Much of the educational system is still influenced by a government party's beliefs even several years after it has left power. These kinds of issues are quite typical and, in general, have become problematic today.

Many equity, diversity, and difference scholars such as J. Banks, C. Sleeter have raised questions as well. For instance, Banks suggests improving critical multicultural education by changing the curriculum, reforming schools, changing teachers' powers, and equipping schools with new textbooks. Schools embracing diversity, difference and equity will apply the concepts of human rights, justice and democracy to all individuals. Thus, a school environment on the diversity, difference and equity spectrum must have a solid base with which to build equity, inclusive education and society. The objective of this study is to practically compare and examine inclusive education globally through global educational needs and pedagogy issues for minority children in three areas.

2. Theoretical Orientation

This study attempts to regard Vygotsky's philosophical and educational thinking as a key feature for exploring situations, which helps us understand equity for minority children in inclusive education. Vygotsky's theory is a view of human higher mental functioning and his main objectives are centered on the child's development in a socio-cultural context. The fundamental thinking of the socio-cultural approach is human's thinking (children) under specific socio-cultural norms created or/and established by their society. Vygotsky's theory was the growth in socio-cultural experience in practical knowledge. Vygotsky defined 'context' as a child's context and how it is expressed. The child is continually acting in social interactions with other people. The main concern of the theoretical idea is how children's activities and thinking are influenced/organized in two different societies, which means their socio-cultural tools.

Many more questions have arisen and discussion both inside and outside our educational system needs to take place. Those thinkers have provided the basis for and supported how we have built inclusive education.

3. Methodology

The type of research methodology was to derive first-hand data that is classified by two methods: interviews and on-site research. For this research, I visited three elementary schools. First I visited P school in Guam in April of 2012. Next was U elementary school in Bloomington, Indiana in

September of 2012. Lastly, I visited B school in Eindhoven, the Netherlands in October of 2012. All three schools have creative programs, a curriculum, and teaching and learning programs for minorities. I will describe their curriculums, textbooks, teaching programs, etc., ascertained through interviews with school administrators and teachers.

4. Results

How can we implement inclusive education in the classroom? The three schools I introduce in my research all have different systems for teaching children. For instance, P school does not have teachers who teach, but children who learn by themselves. The children could call the teachers for help, but there was no teaching using a white board, where all the students were listening together to the teacher. In addition, they had special textbooks and a curriculum that was created by Christian curriculum/textbook makers, based on God, American policy and philosophical theory. For minority children at this school special textbooks were available that could be matched to their English or learning level.

In U elementary school in Indiana, the local sociopolitical system influenced the school very strongly. The textbooks and curriculum were created by an educational committee. In addition, U school is influenced strongly by the local university because most parents work or study at this university. They have a special program for minority children. For minority children, they have a separate classroom for language learning (English) with an ENL teacher, and this class is organized as an individual class. S school in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, does not have a special program for minority children. However, their textbooks and curriculum are based on difference, diversity and equity ideas. This school is organized as a totally inclusive education for minority children.

5. Discussion and significance

I will discuss the following question: which elements would we like to introduce for inclusive education in the classroom, in particular if we consider inclusive education in East Asian countries?

Keep in mind that all three of the schools mentioned above originated in Western socio-political systems and in immigrant countries, which is very different from East Asian countries. It is important to recognize practical methodologies that can be used in the classroom for better inclusive education. Of course some people may say that "We already have inclusive education." To these people I would suggest not to concern themselves with the past, and to look towards the future in which we give all children an equal chance to participate in a truly inclusive and equitable society.