

Inclusive Education: Origins, ‘Defectology’, and Kosovo’s Experiences of Inclusive Education

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Received: September 23, 2019

Accepted: November 11, 2019

Online Published: November 13, 2019

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p52

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p52>

Abstract

Vygotsky (1993) first identified the theory of ‘Defectology’ to understand and describe children with special and additional needs, but essentially categorized them as ‘defective’ (Bartlett et al., 2004; Thomazet, 2009). It is with Vygotsky’s theory in mind that inclusive education frameworks in Kosovo and Russia are critically examined: whilst they both present similar methods of educating students with additional needs (Bartlett, Power & Blatch, 2004), analysis of these methods against their contrasting socio-political environments, requires careful consideration and attention.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusion, defectology, Kosovo

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a central part of the education dichotomy, yet how inclusion is implemented in schools remains a contentious topic amongst educational researchers, primarily due to the variance in socio-political environments where inclusive education occurs (England & Brown, 2001; Haug, 2017; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). Fully inclusive classrooms that stimulate curiosity and promote learning are the ideal goal for many teachers, and typically of ideals that evolve over time, many issues require attention before they can be successfully realised. A persistent concern within education literature is the absence of consensus on an accepted definition of what ‘inclusion’ is. Despite acknowledging the socio-political context and motivations behind inclusive practices, what it means to be ‘inclusive’ is still left open to interpretation (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Haug, 2017).

Despite the benefits of inclusion, there exist a number of drawbacks, largely due that much of what is considered as ‘inclusive’ is defined by personal opinion. Consequently, the current models of inclusive education proceed without an agreed-upon definition, and studies have shown that despite the struggles faced in attempting to implement inclusive classroom practices, there remains benefits for all students (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Haug, 2017; Maciver, Hunter, Adamson, Grayson, Forsyth, & McLeod, 2018).

2. The Difficulty of Defining ‘Inclusion’

Numerous definitions of ‘inclusive practices’ delve deeper into the westernised influence behind the concept of inclusive education (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Haug, 2017). Haug (2017) claims that inclusive education is difficult to define due to its highly politicized nature, and primarily, ‘inclusive education’ is that which revolves “around fellowship, participation, democratization, benefit, equal access, quality, equity and justice” (Haug, 2017, pg. 206). Haug (2017) refers to his definition as a ‘masterpiece of rhetoric’ as it is difficult to argue against education that follows such principles. However, exactly how these ideals are translated into an inclusive classroom is a matter for debate, and as such he concludes that “it is not possible to find one universally institutionalised definition of inclusive education” (Haug, 2017, p. 207). Haug’s ‘masterpiece of rhetoric’ is significant as this is what motivates current interpretations and evaluations of inclusive classroom practices.

Different sources present different views on how inclusive classrooms are defined and evaluated. Ainscow (1998) identified a ‘seven-step process’ that engenders an environment of inclusion and learning. These seven steps begin with the existing knowledge of the staff and students, progressing to the next step to “personalise rather than individualise” (Ainscow, 1998, para. 82). Personalisation essentially requires educators to consider each member of the classroom and what that individual may require in a learning plan. The third step requires educators to view differences as learning opportunities, and not problems that require solving. The fourth step critically examines any

exercise or activity that has the potential to lead to student exclusion, whilst the fifth step incorporates the use of resources already available to teachers, involving the students themselves. The sixth step is to “develop a language of practice” (Ainscow, 1998, para. 82), and the seventh step focusses on changing the school culture so that it encourages risk-taking in this particular area.

3. Disadvantages of Inclusion

Inclusive education is widely recognised as a tool of empowerment, and Slee (2009, p. 98) stated that “care needs to be applied in its usage to avoid the extension of benevolent humanitarianism”, as this often hides conservative imperatives. As the concept of empowerment caters to those already empowered (Slee, 2009), and if the definition of inclusion is so easily adapted to mean whatever the interpreter supposes it to mean, a self-perpetuating cycle of exclusion and inequality is created and sustained. Clark et al. (1999, p. 158) made the argument that previously, special- needs education was “a means not of responding to student’s real ‘needs’, but of preserving the comfort and stability of the mainstream education system”. Therein exists another issue with inclusive education that must be resolved before fully inclusive practices can be realised: any reforms made within such an environment will continue to maintain the inequalities that are built into that comfort.

England and Brown (2001) provide an alternative description of how effective inclusivity in the classroom is practiced. They preface their description by saying, “There is a great universal ‘We’, which ethnic minorities are excluded from” (p. 360). They elaborate on how inclusive practices are driven by politics and to a certain extent, racism. Their research demonstrated that inclusive classroom practices were defined and framed by a western-centric approach, meaning that white, patriarchal concepts dictated what was considered to be ‘inclusive’. England and Brown (2001) also reported that attempts to apply inclusive practices narrated by this political frame, typically resulted in inclusive practices displaying the exact opposite of what should be. By this logic, these practices remain a power-play of different political and social-justice arguments, and due to the westernised background these arguments are played out in, the side that is already in power has the chance at being heard at the expense of the other. Slee (2009, p.98) expressed a similar sentiment and warned that too often the concept of empowerment caters towards those already empowered, and the “privileges it affords them towards the less powerful”.

Whilst the literature concurs that the range of inclusive classroom practices are designed to facilitate learning for those students with special needs (Michailakis & Reich, 2009; Haug, 2017; Sindelar et al., 2006), they tend to indirectly refer to students with disabilities, yet gifted and international students are rarely mentioned. It would appear that education systems across the globe often fail gifted students in the classroom, as many find themselves with “their abilities unrecognised; their needs unmet” (Rimm, Siegle, & Gavis, 2018, p. 1). Research by Rimm et al. (2018) claims that the rights and needs of gifted students are rarely advocated for in comparison with those students who have disabilities. These students have fewer programs in place to facilitate learning, and any programs tend to be met with hostility and stigma by teachers. These programs may be seen as the domain of the rich and upper class (Rimm et al., 2018), unleashing an additional equity issue, especially for those gifted students who originate from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds. Rimm et al. (2018) stated that some educators fail to see the issue with “unrecognised and unsupported talent is wasted talent” mentality (p. 1). This perception is grounded in the belief that gifted children will ‘make it’ despite not being given extra time and assistance, as other students need this time. Often gifted students display underdeveloped study habits in the classroom, and some leave school early in an effort to meet their learning needs that the classroom was unable to achieve (Rimm et al., 2018).

3.1 ‘Inclusion via Exclusion’ Dilemma

Despite the number of positive features of inclusion, a negative feature appears to be that “in all countries there seems to be a gap between formulations and realisations of inclusive education” (Haug, 2017, p. 206). Additionally, Haug (2017, p. 206) states that it is the “quality of teaching and learning processes in inclusive education [that] has low priority”. Despite his statement remaining a contested topic, the learning and teaching processes involved in inclusive education are faced with various dilemmas. Michailakis & Reich’s (2009) research identified a number of dilemmas within inclusive education that contribute to the drawbacks to this process. The first of these is identified as ‘inclusion via exclusion’, whereby students with special needs are included in the classroom, but excluded from the mainstream grading scale and certain parts of the curriculum. The education system relies upon assessment and grading to reflect an individual’s performance in a selected area, yet if certain students are exempt from this grading scale then they are still, in some form, excluded. Inclusion in the school context means that “the individual is not segregated administratively from those pupils who are defined as normal” (Michailakis & Reich, 2009, p. 41), which incorporate those students exposed to the mainstream curriculum. This statement contradicts the ‘inclusion via exclusion’ dilemma, which we now understand to be ‘differentiation’ (Michailakis & Reich, 2009). The ‘inclusion

via exclusion' dilemma relates strongly to Dyson's (2001) research findings that emphasised that if all students are treated equally and the same, the more their differences are overlooked. Paradoxically, the more emphasis placed on what differentiates these students, the more the education system may overlook what they have in common (Dyson, 2001). The inclusive education system has further obstacles as the education system inadvertently perpetuates a sense of inequality, and "damages the interests of those children whom it claims to serve, and to further the interests of those professional groups and others who stand to benefit from maintaining the *status quo*" (Dyson, 2001, p. 25).

The dilemma of exclusion via inclusion has already been presented by Michailakis and Reich (2009), and it is equally crucial to examine the negative aspects of segregation, as it is this framework of inclusive education that is perpetuated by the Russian theory of 'defectology'. Perhaps the best way to examine how the practice of segregation fails students, is to explore how integration assists them. Thomazet (2009) discusses a number of benefits of integrated classrooms, stating that not only does integration better meet these students' needs, but also that it is an "opportunity for an ethical progress" (p. 558). This ethical process refers to each students' right to attend school, and to do so without facing discrimination (Thomazet, 2009).

3.2 Implementation Difficulties of Inclusive Practices

The implementation of inclusive education faces many obstacles, and research by Frankel (2004, p. 311-314) identified three main difficulties: i) Government funding; ii) Teacher training and attitudes, and iii) Support services. Whilst these are recognised issues faced by western countries, in other parts of the globe, inclusive education presents as a far more complicated process as certain other countries face challenges western countries do not. Lack of, or poor Government funding, presents as a primary and persistent barrier to the implementation of inclusive education, as Government funds consistently fall short of adequately funding sustainable changes to the education system (Frankel, 2004). In some situations, financial support offered by Government and other organisations currently place the onus upon the student to medically prove and justify their need for funding support. The student needs to participate in costly and timely assessments to be correctly categorised and labelled, identifying the degree of their disability or ability. Whilst it is important to identify a student's individual requisites to determine what kind of assistance is required to meet their needs, the reality is that if they fail to meet the funding criteria, they are returned to an education system that does not support their needs.

Frankel's second barrier to the implementation of inclusive practices focusses on staff training and their attitudes (Frankel, 2004). Until recently, the lack of training and resources available to educators working with special-needs students was under-recognised. This also highlighted the deficits of opportunity between special needs curricula and professional development for educators. Frankel (2004) identified this professional development deficit in the various attitudes of childcare workers who felt that working with children with additional needs was external to their job description. Therein lies a seemingly small but ultimately significant problem. How can inclusive education be universally implemented if there are no universal understandings of how to educate inclusively? Dalton, McKenzie, and Kahonde (2012) wrote that part of the problem with any form of inclusive education was how teaching staff lacked the appropriate knowledge and skills to work with special-needs students. They added that teacher training programs failed to prepare student teachers for the diversity of student needs in their classrooms (Dalton, et.al., 2012). This gap in professional development continues to manifest today as a perpetuation of a deficit discourse, where students *without* any additional 'special' needs are seen as 'normal', and those *with* additional needs are considered to be 'other', and should therefore not fall under the jurisdiction of the 'normal' classroom teacher. This dichotomy justifies the need for specialist teachers, and the general understanding remains that it is their responsibility to work with these children, and not the classroom teachers.

Frankel's (2004) third barrier of working effectively with students with special needs focusses on the availability of resources, supports, and additional services. Despite the often-restricted availability of in-school, community and departmental resource supports for teachers and students, these resources are often shared and determined by funding due to geographical locations, thereby creating competitive waiting lists (Frankel, 2004). Specialist teachers and services, e.g. speech or occupational therapists, may be called upon to assist in managing the requirements of a child with special needs, but most schools lack funding to sustain such interventions over long periods of time. In most cases, students with special requirements need to wait until services become available, unless the student's parents/carers privately fund the specialist services.

Research by Sindelar et.al (2006) outlined the way classroom reforms for inclusive practices are dictated by the interplay of three leading factors identified as: i) State and district policies; ii) School leadership; and iii) Classroom and teaching practices. The impact of these three factors has a positive ripple effect upon the efficacy of inclusive applications, with each tier influencing the next. Their research reported that when the State or districts are devoted

to a reform, the success of this reform is more likely if school leaders are committed (Sindelar et al., 2006). Any reform or innovation that is backed by strong and consistent leadership within the school environment, will produce teachers who are more likely to act in unison with regards to implementation and commitment of these reforms. Additionally, if these innovations and reforms align with an educator's own beliefs and teaching practices, and have been shown to be of benefit to those students who are difficult to teach, then these reforms are more likely to be successful (Sindelar et al., 2006). Often underpinning the success of these factors are lengthy political processes, where any miscommunication between the tiers may encourage successful inclusive practices to be overlooked, overturned, or simply not put into practice.

4. Advantages of Inclusion

It needs be emphasised that the problem with inclusive education is not the students themselves nor their various needs, but rather the education system itself (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robinson, 1999). Although inclusion has its drawbacks, there are many benefits as every dilemma faced, and every failed resolution to those dilemmas, stands as an excellent example of what to learn from, and where to begin looking for ways to improve inclusive education practices (Dyson, 2001).

Inclusive education has shown as beneficial for students' social development (Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, & Vadasy, 2003). Research by Maciver et al., (2018) supports how inclusive education is valuable in improving student academic levels. Slee (2009) elaborates on the positivity of inclusiveness for students, referring to one of the most positive as "a form of political social action to apprehend unequal social power relations for disabled people" (p. 94).

The notion that inclusion in the mainstream classroom is important developmentally for students who have special needs is supported by a range of sources (Berman, & Graham, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2003; Maciver et al., 2018; Michailakis & Reich, 2009). It would appear however, that the choice of method and strategy to practice inclusion is contested amongst the literature, specifically, the topic of Cooperative learning (Berman, & Graham, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2003; Maciver et al., 2018; Maguvhe, 2015; Michailakis & Reich, 2009).

4.1 Cooperative Learning

Maciver et al. (2018) identified how cooperative learning is a useful model to promote a healthy environment for all students. Johnson and Johnson (2002) describe cooperative learning as a method of teaching and learning that involves groups of students working together to achieve a learning goal. It is theorised that this method of learning is easily adapted to different learning situations, and lends itself to easily teach to a range of issues (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

Many teachers admitted the greatest benefit they found in cooperative learning was the improvement to students' self-esteem levels (Jenkins et al., 2003), and whilst this is an important benefit to students-excluded when evaluating the efficacy of the strategies (Jenkins et al., 2003). Earlier studies undertaken on the effectiveness of cooperative learning seem to corroborate the findings of Jenkins et al. (2003). Research by Moskowitz, Malvin, Schaeffer, and Schaps (1983) looked at the benefits of using cooperative learning in grades five and six, and found that although students reported a less competitive environment, there were few other advantages. Recent research has since dispelled the findings of Jenkins et al. (2003) and Moskowitz et al. (1983), reporting that cooperative learning has a plethora of other benefits besides raising of self-esteem levels, including developing academic achievement, and enriching student motivation (Gillies, 2016; Hattie, 2009; Maciver et al., 2018; Roseth, & Shin, 2014; Slavin, 2014).

In terms of the appropriateness of cooperative learning strategies to the classroom context, one of the most useful aspects is that it is relatively adaptable (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). If one were to consider the appropriateness of this method in terms of a Secondary English Literature classroom, it is evident that there are various benefits as all students have an opportunity to engage with the curriculum, with one another, and to practice and develop their speaking and writing skills. Additionally, Maciver et al. (2018) reported that students' comprehension of written texts was greatly increased via the use of cooperative learning.

Amongst the benefits of cooperative learning, there are also issues. Research by Jenkins' et al. (2003) reported the difficulties of evaluating the efficacy of teacher opinions and perceptions of cooperative learning. They noted that "It is hard to reconcile the inconsistent research findings on cooperative learning with the strong advocacy for it found in special education literature" (p. 281). A chief problem they encountered was that teachers did not always consider the inclusion of special education students as a necessary factor when evaluating the efficacy of their cooperative learning methods (Jenkins et al., 2003).

4.2 Teaching Assistants

The modern concept of the teacher assistant's role requires classroom teachers to collaboratively discuss intervention plans for special-needs students, so that effective intervention can take place at an individual level (Berman & Graham, 2018). Ainscow (1998) reported on the role of teacher assistants in an inclusive setting, believing that their presence within the classroom increased students' feelings of exclusion, and that the students they were assigned to often felt they were 'other' from their classmates. Ainscow (1998) elaborated that utilising teacher assistants allowed teachers to claim less responsibility for selected students in their classroom, implying that as teacher assistants promoted 'exclusion' of these students, they should be eliminated from the mainstream classroom. The motivations behind this theory are dually magnanimous and idealistic. The reality remains that today's classrooms are overpopulated, with a broader profile of students presenting with ever-changing demands and constants. Until classrooms are well-supported both within school and the wider community, it would appear counter-productive to remove teacher assistants from the mainstream classroom as they provide 1:1 support for students who have special needs.

4.3 Inclusion on the Global Stage

In order to gauge where Australia's track record on implementing inclusive education stands globally, it is important to consider the practices, attitudes and contributions of other countries and nations towards the implementation of inclusive education, and what may be learned from their experiences. A major global issue facing the implementation and resourcing of all educational inclusive frameworks, is the internal dissension within governments, and in some parts of the world, the outbreak of war.

Frankel (2004) explained that to influence the success of inclusive procedures and policies in Australia, the pedagogy, procedures and attitudes associated with a set curriculum (Frankel, 2004) need to be identified. Concurrently, the "evolving socio-political realities and relationships" (Frankel, 2004, p. 311) must be considered, as they impact upon not only individual students, but their environment (Haug, 2017; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006).

Research and discussion by Bartlett, Power, and Blatch (2004) confirmed that the disruptive phenomena of internal dissension and war prevents many education systems from fulfilling their purpose. They further elaborate why the education system needs to be re-designed, arguing that political unrest could be countered through the education system by creating a foundation of stability within society (Bartlett et al., 2004). Their study clarified that whilst countries faced by war and political unrest have these two barriers to inclusive practices to contend with, they also must overcome the three barriers outlined above by Frankel (2004). With this being the case, implementation of inclusive education policies and practices becomes a very intricate process.

4.4 Vygotsky's 'Defectology' Theory

The origins of Vygotsky's 'Defectology' theory to describe Soviet children with special needs is misconstrued. The Russian concept of 'defectology' was initially grounded in the belief that children with learning impairments were defective, however, Vygotsky (1978) from his research identifying the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), essentially took this model and made it into an educational theory, upon which many current operating concepts on special education have been formed (Bottcher & Dammeyer, 2012; Vygotsky, 1993). The research of Bottcher and Dammeyer (2012) argues that cultural beliefs and cultural-historical constructs influenced Soviet countries to view children with special needs as 'defective'; not Vygotsky's 'Defectology' theory itself. This presents an interesting premise, as Vygotsky's theory *does* refer to a disability as a 'defect' (Vygotsky, 1993), and may explain why schooling institutions use his theory to camouflage their discriminations towards disabilities.

Vygotsky's 'Defectology' theory discusses two strands of child Development: i) the Natural line of biological development, and ii) the Cultural line of development (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 43). The Natural line of development considers an individual's biological development, referring to both cognitive and physical development. The Cultural line of development studies the socialisation and development of cultural tools that are acquired gradually as the individual ages. Bottcher and Dammeyer (2012) elaborate upon Vygotsky's work claiming that it is the structure of a particular culture that produces the societal inability to understand and cater for the social development of these children. Vygotsky states that for a child presenting with no disabilities, these two lines of development co-exist, meaning that their stages of development support one another (Vygotsky, 1993). However, when there is a disability, this process is interrupted. This interruption is not attributed to the child, but rather to the cultural norms and expectations in which they are living (Vygotsky, 1993).

4.5 Russia, 'Defectology' and Kosovo

In order to fully understand the implications that Vygotsky's 'Defectology' theory has on inclusive education, it would be relevant to briefly explore how 'defectology' initially manifest in the Russian education system. Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov (2007) claim that up until the 1990s, the term 'defective' or other derivative forms, were used to describe Russian students with special needs. Difficulties arise in examining how Russian 'defectology' theory used in Russia during the 1950s and into the 1960s, manifest in Kosovo's inclusive education, and are only made more prominent by the ongoing political tensions and unrest. A global issue facing the implementation and resourcing of all educationally inclusive frameworks, is the internal dissension within governments, the power of the people's voice, and the outbreak of war.

The Russian model of 'defectology' centrally underpinned Kosovo's inclusive education system, displayed primarily as segregation from the school itself (Bartlett et al., 2004). These students, particularly those with physical disabilities, were placed into schools designed specifically for students with those needs, resulting in the development and practice of segregated schools. Children were then given one of two classifications of learning: 'capable' or 'incapable' (Iarskaia-Smirnova & Romanov, 2007), both of which are divisive by nature and embody the essence of segregation. This segregation manifests as students with special needs remaining at home due to a culmination of "negative attitudes throughout the community, generally towards people with intellectual, sensory, and physical differences" (p. 489).

Whilst the goal of seamlessly integrating special needs into the mainstream classroom remains as the ideal, there still are a number of steps required in order to meet this goal (Thomazet, 2009). When students are segregated from the mainstream classroom due to their ability, not only are they being denied their right to be educated with their peers, but there arises the argument that this segregation reinforces the premise that "it is no longer the education system that is ill, but the children" (Thomazet, (2009) p. 559). Segregation of students encourages labelling for categorisation, potentially failing to identify individual uniqueness amidst the generalisation of labelling. The act of segregation is problematic as the skills and developmental rate of children exhibiting learning difficulties are as varied as those who are not (Thomazet, 2009). Thomazet (2009) best describes inclusive education and thereby integration, by saying that "Inclusive education must be a model of the kind of democracy one would like to see throughout society" (p. 558). The integration of mainstream and special-needs students in the same classroom is one of the end goals of successful inclusion. For this article, the definition of integration used is a threefold one presented by Thomazet's (2009). First there is physical integration, which refers to the physical inclusion of all students within the classroom. The second branch of this definition is social integration, which references inclusion of all students in social settings outside of the classroom context. Lastly, Thomazet's (2009) definition of integration includes pedagogic integration, where all students participate in the learning activities within the classroom.

In Kosovo's recent history, there has not been an inclusive model of education where students with additional needs were involved in the mainstream classroom setting. Rather, students with special needs were gradually removed from the mainstream classroom, and taught together in alternate classrooms (Bartlett et al., 2004). The choice of language used to explain theories such as Vygotsky's ZPD has influenced its understanding and interpretation. By way of illustration, Kosovo's early stance on inclusive education continued to refer to a disability as a 'defect', thereby ensuring it will be viewed as such, regardless of the research or premise behind such theories. Kosovo presents a challenging example to analyse in terms of inclusive education, as there many other environmental occurrences that require consideration. Kosovo children with additional needs to this day, still face discrimination in the classroom, more so because educators are so underprepared and unwilling to teach them (Iarskaia-Smirnova & Romanov, 2007). For Kosovo, survival has been its central focus amidst its political instability and war (Bartlett et al., 2004). Against this political context, Bartlett et al. (2004) provide a pertinent example of the difficulties implementing inclusive practices in Kosovo, by describing a special-needs school that was frequently the victim of raids that resulted in the abuse and rape of the students who were in attendance at the time.

Dyson, (2001) argued that crucial to the improvement of inclusive education is the learning gleaned from other countries experiences, both successes and mistakes. Many western cultures have enjoyed a life free from conflict, war, and experience relative political stability, and as such, have been able to observe and learn from other country's mistakes and successes when embedding inclusive education into their mainstream classrooms (Thomazet, 2009). Despite the value associated with these learning experiences of inclusive education, it may be culturally insensitive to implement a western version of inclusive education based on western ideals, with a war-torn country such as Kosovo, where quality education of any kind is difficult to attain (England and Brown, 2001). Perhaps the main focus should be less on the goal of integration of special needs into the mainstream, and more on the quality of each,

as these steps would lead up to the end goal; at least until such a time as the political environment allows for a more progressive approach towards inclusive education. As of 2004, there were indications that this was already the chosen method of improving education for students with special needs in Kosovo (Bartlett et al. (2004)).

5. Summary

It has been demonstrated that whilst implementing successful inclusive education practices in global education systems, they still face many complex and interrelated problems (Frankel, 2004), as they do not account for the additional barriers facing its implementation in countries that have dissension, political unrest, or war (Bartlett et al., 2004). In these cases, it becomes more difficult to simply state what inclusive education should be, as these countries face obstacles western societies do not, and therefore to assume a western-centric approach to inclusive education is obsolete (England and Brown, 2001). Whilst this might be the case, it has also been demonstrated that segregation, and other educational approaches framed by Vygotsky's 'defectology' are not beneficial and do, to a certain degree, deprive students with additional needs of their right to be equally educated alongside their peers (Thomazet, 2009).

It may take time before a united and agreed definition of 'inclusive education' gains consensus. Some researchers understand 'inclusive education' be an act of social justice (England & Brown, 2001) whilst others claim 'inclusive education' is defined by the political climate it is utilised within (Sindelar et al., 2006). Other academics believe that 'inclusive education' is a westernised concept that caters to those already empowered, when it should be used as tool for dissolving inequalities (Haug, 2017; Slee, 2009). There are many positive features to inclusive education, such as the social and academic development it affords all students (Jenkins et al., 2003; Maciver et al., 2018). However, there are also drawbacks, and these are chiefly expressed through the ease at which outside parties can manipulate the definition of 'inclusion' to allow them to perpetuate further inequalities, and the exclusion of children considered to be gifted and talented (Haug, 2017; Michailakis & Reich, 2009; Rimm et al., 2018). Models of inclusive classroom practices are still debated, with not all of them shown to be of benefit, or to be fully appropriate within the classroom context (Ainscow, 1998; Jenkins et al., 2003). However, these results are contested, with ongoing research reporting the usefulness of inclusive education (Jenkins et al., 2003; Maciver et al., 2018). Added to this, although there are issues with inclusive education that revolve around the continued perpetuation of inequalities within the education system, there are benefits of learning from the past mistakes of others so as to ensure that eventually, all classrooms globally will be fully inclusive (Dyson, 2001).

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