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The Philosophy Of Inclusion In Education

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Abstract

Objective: Addresses inclusion in education as a philosophy reflecting on guiding principles and theoretical support. Problem: Narrowing inclusive education only to disability disregards the broader view of diversity. Current practices to an extent neglect the value of human existence guiding reasoning on types of principles that could strengthen practices. Methodology: Theoretical research through a review of related literature and reflections on practices were used. The normative approach implied in this discussion is value-driven. Main Results: Fourteen principles were identified, grouped into two broad units: intrapersonal constituting the metaphysical and epistemological; interpersonal made up of social relationships and ethical principles. Conclusion: This article has contributed to the theoretical understanding of inclusion as a philosophy in inclusive education based on principles and with support from MMR theory.

Key-words: Inclusion; Principles; Philosophy.

Resumen

Objetivo: El estudio aborda la inclusión en la educación como filosofía reflexionando sobre principios rectores y sustento teórico. Problema: se busca acotar la educación inclusiva solo a la discapacidad, desconociendo la visión más amplia de la diversidad. Las prácticas actuales, hasta cierto punto, descuidan el valor de la existencia humana al guiar el razonamiento sobre los tipos de principios que podrían fortalecer las prácticas. Metodología: el estudio se basó en una investigación teórica a través de una revisión de la literatura relacionada y reflexiones sobre las prácticas. El enfoque normativo implícito en esta discusión está basado en valores. Resultados Principales: Se identificaron catorce principios, agrupados en dos grandes unidades: el intrapersonal constituyendo el metafísico y el epistemológico; relación interpersonal constituida por relaciones sociales y principios éticos. Conclusión: Este artículo buscó contribuir a la comprensión teórica de la inclusión como filosofía en la educación inclusiva basada en principios y fundamentada en la Teoría de la Reciprocidad Mutua Mediada, entendida como MMR.

Palabras clave: Inclusión; Principios; Filosofía.

Resumo

Objetivo: o estudo aborda a inclusão na educação como uma filosofia refletindo sobre princípios orientadores e suporte teórico. Problema: busca estreitar a educação inclusiva apenas à deficiência desconsiderando a visão mais ampla da diversidade. As práticas atuais, em certa medida, negligenciam o valor da existência humana orientando o raciocínio sobre tipos de princípios que poderiam fortalecer as práticas. Metodologia: o estudo se baseou em uma pesquisa teórica por meio de revisão de literatura relacionada e reflexões sobre as práticas. A abordagem normativa implícita nesta discussão é orientada por valores. Principais Resultados: Foram identificados quatorze princípios, agrupados em duas grandes unidades: o intrapessoal constituindo o metafísico e o epistemológico; interpessoal constituído por relações sociais e princípios éticos. Conclusão: este artigo buscou contribuir para a compreensão teórica da inclusão como filosofia na educação inclusiva baseada em princípios e com suporte da Teoria da Reciprocidade Mútua Mediada, compreendida como MMR.

Palavras-chave: Inclusão; Princípios; Filosofia.

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Introduction

This paper addresses inclusion as a philosophy in education to create awareness of opportunities for life's transformation by ensuring psychological harmony for every individual seeking access to education. Inclusion could act as a powerful social and economic catalyst because of the belief that once an individual gains access to education, there is hope for a better future because of its implied moral ethics of social justice. Therefore, inclusion is not just the mechanical bringing of people together (RAPP; CARROL-GRANADOS, 2021) because different types and levels of consciousness in thinking and acting are required for effective action (WOLFENDEN 2020; TCHOMBE, 2019a). With the emerging education landscape today, new, and better learning spaces for inclusion should be considered with a focus on practicalities that would value diversity. This reflection, on inclusion as a philosophy, directs attention to managing multiple identities through the acceptance of differences.

Inclusion is vital for the creation of an inclusive society where everyone is given the chance and opportunity to grow and be valued for the contribution each can make. In any society, all individuals deserve equal access to quality education that addresses the needs and interests of the diversity of persons. Based on this philosophy, various principles and strategies adopted should support not only access per se but also equity in access to high-level learning through quality participation in higher-order cognitive classroom dialogues and interactions in collaborative teaching and cooperative learning. Understanding

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the knowledge and theory guiding inclusion provides a valuable starting point as it is based on the philosophy of belongingness, providing the basis for seeing inclusion as a cultural force for school renewal (O'BRIEN; O'BRIEN, 1995). This article focuses on understanding the concept of inclusion generally but more so on the philosophical principles predicating inclusion in practices. As collaboration and cooperation are valuable strategies for inclusion, the socio-cultural constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1978), and Gindis (2003), will be addressed. But more emphasis would be on the Mediated Mutual Reciprocity theory (MMR; TCHOMBE, 2019) because of its shift from the primary role of significant others to the important role of the learner based on a non-hierarchical principle from an Africentric perspective.

Identification of principles underlining inclusion as a philosophy

Why should inclusion be considered philosophy in education? Philosophy deals with fundamental questions, on existence, reason, knowledge, values, mind, and language. Reflecting on practices for inclusion shows that the above concepts are major interactive elements in determining inclusive actions. By asking questions about existence, one is indirectly searching to understand the being or the reality of life through reasoning by comprehending and making value judgments about life. Reasoning about being searches for the purpose of life regarding existing and surviving particularly in dissonance situations as in cases requiring

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how to include so all beings could have equal access to quality education and socio-economic resources. This is where intellectual independence is required for the objective operationalisation and implementation inclusion. Elements required are accepting, understanding, and attending to differences and diversity, important for any decision-making process. These are values related to human functioning required when offering services to humanity. Establishing philosophical principles in inclusion is also to endeavour to understand the human condition necessitating inclusion or exclusion. Besides, it enables us to understand why the human condition is what it is, as observed through differentiated behavioural manifestations in different contexts and situations. Inclusion as a philosophy establishes assumptions about how education and the world of work may reduce challenges and barriers to learning and participation, and even facilitate the search for alternative strategies using information communication and technological devices to facilitate and enhance access in all its dimensions.

Inclusion in education embraces a philosophy manifested in addressing equality, sharing, participation, and the worth and dignity of being. It is concerned with access to meaningful and purposeful knowledge about quality learning for all, and work opportunities also for all. It is also a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and feel safe. Inclusion is a philosophy because its manifested actions are derivatives

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of held beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and cognitive functioning. Schools provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside her/his family, enabling the development of social relationships and interactions that has implication for all the above views including developing resilience. Inclusion is expected to provide access to a supportive wholesome environment with habits that encourage positive development. Positive approaches toward embracing diversity are valuable, to establish a developmental model for a pluralistic society as attitudes and beliefs could be psychological concerns. In this case, relationships, shared experience, and a sense of identity would need to be well nurtured.

For education to accomplish its ends, therefore, both for the individual learner and for society, it must be based upon experience where powerful educational experiences are a result of two fundamental principles, i.e., continuity and interaction (DEWEY, 1938). Continuity refers to how experiences, both past, and present, influence the future, while interaction refers to how one's current situation influences one's experiences, leading to growth within a specified direction. The principles of continuity and interaction intercept and unite, having implications for development where freedom of intelligence is respected and encouraged. Such freedom from inclusive perspectives allows for the freedom to observe and make judgments. But importantly, the concern for maintaining respect for self-control also is a critical element. Inclusion in this context

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encourages flexibility as an important capacity for enriching physical, mental health, and intellectual growth.

Flexibility is important for inclusion. Theoretically, the mediated mutual reciprocity (MMR; TCHOMBE, 2019) allows for such flexibility through its interactional process that is bidirectional, with equal access to higher-order learning available to all through equitable distribution higher-order questions (TCHOMBE, 2019a). This provides access to equity in engaging in complex reflections. Learners would do more, and better if they are made to be central elements in any learning context. The major philosophy for inclusion, therefore, is not only learner-centered but also experiencing social justice and equity for all. Inclusion is a process of developing creative and reflective thinking using dynamic strategies to increase participation in learning for all by ensuring access. Central to Dewey's (1938, p. 58) educational philosophy is that education is a social process focusing on mutual accommodation and adaptation.

The philosophy of inclusion in education searches for principles directing harmony in human existence through how the human mind accesses the reality that underlies its existence. There is the awareness that the human mind can know universal ethical truths that are at the root of human rights, social justice as well as political and economic freedoms. Thus, inclusion as a philosophy in education instills a spirit of identifying and appreciating differences through ensuring equality guided by sound principles. These will be identified and discussed in the next section.

Fourteen Philosophical Principles of Inclusion with Psychological Implications

African Humanism highlights the significance of the African sense of respect for the human person (EGBUNU, 2014). The traditional values are hospitality, the primacy of the person, respect for life, a sense of solidarity, and other characteristic features of the communalistic life common in African settings. This depicts the holism of complex interdependency and mutual interconnectedness. If Africans consider a person as the purpose of all actions, this view should be the concern of all social policy statements as valued by Africans (IGWE, 2002). This explains why Igwe (2002) further defines humanism as embracing, "the creation of the conditions that are favourable to the practical exercise of man's fundamental rights, and the treatment of his pains and tribulations as a direct collective concern" (IGWE, 2002, p. 189).

African humanistic philosophy can contribute much to inclusion in education. It, therefore, reiterates that access for all informs on the point that all institutions have the potential to support anyone to have a full and worthwhile life. Therefore, persons with disabilities and/or with barriers to learning in the normal school system or any education type, require specific principles as stated in the fourteen principles below.

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Principles of Belongingness/ Togetherness

Belongingness and Togetherness are considered in this paper as serving similar functions because one can belong or fit in if there is an element of devotedness or closeness or even attachment.

These values represent the principles guiding the Africantric social support system encouraged by African spirituality which is humanity driven. Belongingness refers to a human emotional need for interpersonal relationships, affiliating, connectedness, and being part of a group. Characteristics of belongingness include trust, acceptance, receiving and giving, sharing, collaborating, affection, and being connected.

These characterised behaviours also constitute the principles embedded in the MMR theory (TCHOMBE, 2019). Achieving this requires cooperation, team spirit, and collaboration as important ways to fulfill belongingness needs.

These principles are found in our African settings using different terminologies. Igwebuike (Nigeria, Igbo) like Ubutun (South Africa) constitutes African philosophy meaning belongingness because these concepts create a sense of being. Every human being desired that sense of belonging knowing they are connected to others as beings and in space where their identity can be located. The

African worldview here draws from the Africantric philosophy of communalism and collectivism including

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Nyerere's (1968) Unjamma socialism philosophy (Tanzania) with an economic agenda for education. Based on such a philosophy, belongingness is indispensable for inclusive practices. Belongingness guarantees the expression of relational unity as Igwebuike, which sees unity as strength and guarantees a pragmatic relationship that is symbiotic (ONEBUNNE, 2020). The unhu or ubuntu concept means "beingness" which is synonymous with valuing human dignity. Beingness is defined by qualities of the individual's participation in valued family and community activities. This is enshrined in the Ndebele saying: okusilima sindlebende kwabo. Meaning: "No disabled person is seen as disabled by his/her kinsmen" (MPOFU et al., 2007).

In Cameroon, the Bamileke tradition, values being together, team spirit, supporting, and caring for one another. This practice creates a sense of community where harmony and solidarity are valued and encouraged. The African worldview of belongingness, therefore, is known in the Bamileke dialect as Fu/Fusi (in the West Region of Cameroon), solidarity as Shu-nshu/Ta'si, and togetherness as Shu-nshu are all elements of strength and power known as Ngu'. These views are embedded in the social thoughts and practices of the family and any community of people. This view is the same for Igwebuike as indicated by the Igbo of Nigeria.

African traditional values supporting inclusion found in our socio-cultural data remind us of the fact that living our realities remains a fundamental fact that should enable us

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to search for more knowledge in our oral traditions housing the African philosophy and humanistic psychology to inform inclusion. As we accept diversity through identifying, understanding, and appreciating differences, interactions with others are facilitated and more dialectical. A sense of belonging is crucial, as it provides a learning environment that promotes all-around development for all learners together in the same educational setting. Our African socio-cultural background teaches the concept of family and relationality. These are found in African proverbs, folklores, myths, symbols, songs, and names (NYERERE, 1968; KANU, 2022).

Principles of Sharing

Everyone has the capacity and potential to share and so should be given the opportunity to contribute as it does have a positive impact on self-perception. Everyone in today's world wants to contribute, be recognised, and be acknowledged by others. We all have the burning desire to be needed.

Principle of Attention

Attention consumes and shapes human existence because we become what we deal with. Attention is one of those intangible elements of human existence that we only are aware of when we have trouble giving it. Our brains are

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selective. The teachers' unequal distribution of attention was highly criticised by pupils (WORLDBANK, 2017).

Principle of Understanding

Knowing the psychological characteristics of the children/students in the regular education system is vitally important. This leads to a comfortable adjustment for both children with and without disabilities and creates opportunities for developing supportive and caring skills as evident from research (WORLDBANK, 2017).

Principle of Equality

Everyone has the right to access knowledge and acquire competence, skill, and information. Inclusive education deems fit to fulfill its constitutional responsibility by calling for all groups of children/students to learn together and as a result, to learn to live together (SEE BHIKHU PAREKH,1970).

Principle of Participation

Inclusive education provides opportunities for all children/students with or without disabilities to participate actively and equally. All students and their family members should be motivated to participate in every event, programme, scheme, initiative, etc. Regular participation enhances the confidence of the students as well as that of their family members.

Principle of Acceptance

Acceptance empowers growth because it enables us to accept our realities, subsequently opening the space necessary to navigate creatively through being together and participating with others. Acceptance yields freedom and efforts that procure enhances attention. Every parent wants her/his child to learn or be educated with all other students in a regular classroom and become able to lead her/his life independently. In inclusive education, all the pupils/students should be welcomed and accepted without any kind of discrimination.

Principles of Individual Differences

Each child is different and unique. Even identical twins are not the same. Inclusion considers and offers an enabling learning atmosphere to the benefit of all the children.

Principle of Change

Inclusive education aims to change the system of education to meet the requirement of all children. Inclusive education is not about changing the children/students to fit into the education system. It tries to include all the children for equal education irrespective of their different characteristics.

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Principle of Non-discrimination

Non-discrimination in the teaching process and behavioural manifestation encourages and expresses equality, participation, and equal opportunities in all activities

Principle of Positive Attitudes

Attitudes have an enormous influence on people's behaviour. Positive attitudes represent stable knowledge, emotions, and stable reactions towards all people, phenomena, and situations.

Principle of Need-base

Inclusive education meets the personal and educational needs of all children/students whether disabled or not enabling them to realise the optimum development of their potential. Inclusive education considers that every child is important. It recognises his/her strengths and provides opportunities to transform those strengths into creative potential.

Principle of Social Security and Social Relationship

Inclusive education helps disadvantaged children to have a respectable and respected space in society so they can feel that they are an important part of the societal system.



Principles to Choose and Control

Everyone has a right to personal choices that he/she can control. A critical point to make here is that one's individuality and personhood are made up of significant decisions and preferences. Institutions could enable persons to develop the range and scale of choices they can make in their lives.

The fourteen philosophical principles are regrouped into four groups drawn from Plato's model: metaphysical, epistemology, social relationship, and ethical principles seen in Figure 1.

Figura 1 - Philosophical principles of inclusion

Intrapersonal Principles	Metaphysical principles Principles of Individual differences Principles of choose control and need-based	Epistemological principles Principle of attention Principle of understanding & participation
Interpersonal Principles	Social relationship principles Principles of belonginess/ togetherness and sharing/social security	Ethical principles Principle of equality and change Principle of positive attitudes and acceptance

Source: Adapted from Plato's metaphor of the divided line Plato (380. BC) The Republic (509d-511e). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (February 15, 2021)

> categories philosophical principles of interpersonal principles at the lower level and intrapersonal principles at the higher level. Each category has a subset of two modes of principles and each mode has two types of principles. The interpersonal category has ethical and social

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relationship principles. The ethical has the principles of equality and change as well as the principle of positive attitudes and acceptance. Regarding social relationships, there are the principles of belongingness, togetherness, and sharing as well as the principle of social security.

In the intrapersonal category, there are epistemological and metaphysical units of principles. In epistemology, there is the principle of attention and the principle of understanding and participation. In the metaphysical, the principles of Individual differences, likewise the principles of choice, control, and need-based.

The fourteen principles and their respective thematic groupings can be of value to explain the action that would enhance inclusion. They address moral concerns because they involve values of respect and appreciation for diversity. These principles contribute to democratic moral values that can promote self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. These practices build resilience in the learners.

The metaphysical and ethical principles enhance participation. Involvement is of particular importance in an inclusive education setting where democratic values play an important role (NIHOLM, 2006). The philosophy of inclusion in education sets no boundaries. It is an open, all-embracing view that has great potential to encourage values and beliefs for contributions to effective teaching-learning for positive outcomes for all. What is crucial is valuing diversity and ensuring equal opportunities that will lead to success for all. (WATKINS, 2012). These principles need to be reflected in

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the policy, curriculum, physical environment, and the broader environment in which diversity is valued, influencing all administrative and research activities and actions.

From a global perspective, international declarations on the inclusion of All in education as a right for all children have been enshrined in international conventions since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In all of these dialogues what is of relevance to this paper, is drawn from the broadened conceptualisation of inclusive education articulated at the forty-eighth session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education, held in Geneva in November 2008, where it was acknowledged that 'inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity in different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities (UNESCO, 2008, p.126). Vividly, the principles discussed above as depicted in figure 1 would provide useful orientation for the realization of the above views.

The Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Continental Strategic Agenda (ESA 2016-2025, AU,2015), and the African Union Agenda (2063, 2015a) provided a broader perspective for the discussion on inclusion. According to UNESCO (2016a), sustainable global goal 4 of the 17 sustainable development goals focused on quality education. Its central aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning

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opportunities for lifelong learning for all. Sustainable development goal 4 reiterates the significance of education as a fundamental human right. The pertinence of SDG 4 is that it constitutes a paradigm shift in development because it permeates all aspects of sustainable development. This can be seen in the following analysis and the place value of SDG4 in each of the selected SDGs explicitly in SDGs 5, 6, 7,19,16, and 17. The 6 Sustainable Development goals mentioned above constitute democratic values that are intertwined with 14 philosophical principles inclusion grouped into four thematic principles. Meshing the above identified 6 SDGs reflecting SDG 4 with four thematic themes of the principles in figure 1 informs the development of a mind map to guide the inputs of the philosophy of inclusion in education practices. The SDG 4 brings out three concepts requiring expansion for major better understanding in relation to inclusion. Quality reminds us that education in all its forms is geared toward learning to understand, to know, to do, to live together, and to be (DELORS, 1996) and no one should be deprived of this. It is an education geared to tapping each person's talents and potential and developing learner personalities so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies (TORRES, 2001).

Equity entails that each person, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, language, or religious beliefs should have access to the same quality of life. This means that for education to be equitable in formal

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settings, schools must be ready to embrace these diversities and provide the necessary human and material resources in conformity with learning styles, and multiple intelligences.

Lifelong learning is very central to this discussion. Although lifelong learning in the past was narrowed down to adult education, the post-2015 agenda and SDG4 construed lifelong learning as a process that begins at birth and continues through all stages of life (UNESCO 2016a). This approach to education incorporates multiple and flexible learning pathways and strengthens links between formal, non-formal, and informal learning spaces discussed earlier in this paper.

Specifically, for the African context, the humanistic approach to education is captured in Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025, AU, 2015) both have the goal of the orientation of education and training systems to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development. Dewey (1916) commented on how society is fast changing, so people must be educated. Such education must be built from past experiences. The values constituting the philosophy of inclusive education are found in African humanistic philosophy and psychology.

Inclusive education encourages learners to contribute to their own learning, a view which is well-articulated by the social constructive theory of Vygotsky (1978) and Gindis's (2003) sociocultural theory and children with special needs. But the Mediated Mutual Reciprocal theory of Tchombe

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(2019) highlighted more learners' central role in mediation. Collaborative learning is associated with much of classroom dialogues whereby all in the learning game co-construct and share knowledge. Collaborative activities give both the learner and the teacher feedback on their respective roles during the learning process (WALTON, 2012). In the advocated learning process, the learners must be in control of their own learning to be accountable for the outcomes (TCHOMBE, 2019). Cesar and Santos (2006) refer to this collaboration as a "learning community" where learning is dependent on the communicative process, meaning as negotiated mutually, and knowledge constructed collectively.

Inclusion encourages transformative learning through cooperative and collaborative learning. O'Sullivan's (2003) definition of transformative learning is significant for education. Transformative learning involves inclusive experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feelings, and actions which is possible if the principles above are applied in classroom contexts. Engaging educational process by employing philosophical principles would establish a shift of consciousness that would dramatically and irreversibly alter our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world. With the above definition, the pedagogy of cooperation and collaboration would be required to put in place structures to promote and

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collective endeavors through enhance synergetic discussions and exchanges.

Conclusion

Globalization and its emphasis on information communication technology, urbanization creating new lifestyles have implications for social, economic, and development of psychological people. Fashioning socio-economic and educational expectations, necessitate new institutional arrangements for education built on inclusion as a philosophy taking cognisance of diversity. Overall, these require systems of thought based on sound philosophy to direct inclusion. Education directly influences students' life chances and life outcomes. Education is the development of personhood and the development of full human potential irrespective of status or category. Today's global, knowledge-based economy makes education critical to pupils'/students' success in life by opening opportunities for lifelong learning and development based on the philosophical principles embedded in inclusive practices. Inclusion, therefore, begs for fairness, equity, and respect for all as necessary and relevant social ingredients. The home, school, and workplace all depict the outside world where people meet, socialize, and communicate. So, understanding diversity provides a source of rich resources that will support the learning of all children (BOOTH; AINSCOW, 2000, p.12).

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The philosophy of inclusion goes beyond physical locations. It is built on strong values and belief systems promoting participation, belongingness, connectedness, and flow of interaction. Inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to diversity (UNESCO, 2005; KOCHUNG, TCHOMBE, 2017), requires changes and modifications of approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision to empower all children/students. Regarding relevance, Dirk (1998) states that inclusive curricula for Africa should understand African societies as individuals living collectively where the philosophical principles of inclusion are ingrained in the culture.

On this account everyone's uniqueness is a major element of success in special and individual contributions (BREWER, 1991). Participation constitutes implication because we are human beings only in the degree to which we participate or are allowed to participate. The fourteen philosophical principles of inclusion hold the key to the extent to which they are employed to encourage importance participation. The of the principle participation is found in most writings on the philosophy of education.

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