

Summary

An epistemological approach to inclusion

Ksenija Romstein

Faculty of teacher Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia

Recent pedagogical literature shows that there is no unique understanding of the concept of inclusion, but numerous perspectives that are often unclear and contradictory. Two prominent perspectives – the individual and the social – explore inclusion (or rather, its effects) in terms of the existence of an individual and a society. From the point of view of the individual perspective inclusion is interpreted as involving special needs children into everyday life, which implies normalisation and assimilation. The social perspective on inclusion, although explicitly focused onto the wellbeing of the individual, simultaneously maintains a subordinated position of special needs. In spite of the efforts to change the terminology according to current scholarly insights about the nature of special needs, the terminology continues to be used without thoroughly considering its meaning. This paper proposes an epistemological approach as one of the possible approaches to understanding the concepts of inclusion and special needs with the purpose of drawing attention to the existence of uncritical (and sometimes inadequate) application of the said concepts whose implicit and explicit meanings have various ramifications for the life of an individual.

Key words: epistemological approach, inclusion, identity, special need, implicit meanings.