ED 353 764   EC 301 798

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TITLE   Philosophy, Differences, and Education.
PUB DATE   92
NOTE   15p.; In: Bunsen, Teresa D., Ed., And Others. Forum
                on Emerging Trends in Special Education: Implications
                for Personnel Preparation (4th, Washington, D.C.,
                April 9-10, 1992); see EC 301 793.
PUB TYPE   Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Access to Education; *Educational Philosophy;
                Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary
                Education; *Human Relations; *Individual Differences;
                Interpersonal Relationship; Limited English Speaking;
                *Mainstreaming; Models; *Severe Disabilities

ABSTRACT
                This paper argues that the philosophic assumptions
underlying full inclusion efforts for students with severe
disabilities and other restructuring movements are actually barriers
to "best practice" implementation, and an alternative perspective
based on social relations is offered. First two different
perspectives on disability, the "different person" perspective (which
sees differences as inherent and immutable) and the rights
perspective (which views all individuals as entitled to the same
rights, services, and outcomes) are compared. Both perspectives are
seen to result in a dilemma and be inappropriate to guide current
restructuring. In contrast, the social relations perspective views
differences in the context of relationships which are expected to
change with time or as the comparison basis changes. This perspective
is applied to a case in which an emphasis on gender differences in
provision of maternity leave is replaced with relation-based
provision of parental or family leave. Other examples apply the
social relations perspective to inclusion of students with severe
disabilities and the provision of bilingual/bicultural education to
all students and not just to the Spanish-speaking minority. (Contains
15 references.) (DB)

Philosophy, Differences, and Education

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The past decade has witnessed a plethora of changes in the content and structure of programs for persons with severe disabilities. The developmental approach as the sole basis for determining "what to teach" was replaced and eventually integrated with a functional, ecological, and activity-based approach. In addition, instructional strategies have expanded beyond the direct instructional approach to include incidental teaching and the use of natural cues and correction procedures. The structure of programs identified as models of "best practice" has changed from separate schools to integrated placements within regular age-appropriate schools, and currently to full-inclusion models where relationships, rather than interactions, can be supported. Within the logic of these changes there is a focus on the rights of students with disabilities, their entitlement as people to services, and a continual struggle to eradicate the second class (and even third class) citizen status so prevalent in the past.

The Problem

Many of the changes in the structure and content of what comprises "best practices" are heralded by some as needed and necessary changes. Others view these changes as movements which threaten to relegate learning to the back seat in favor of image enhancement or opportunities for social interactions. A third position, and one I wish to expand upon, posits that many

critics and advocates of inclusion and other restructuring movements are often supporting strategies for students based on either an entitlement or different person philosophic assumption. These philosophic assumptions have resulted in great strides forward in services and quality-of-life issues for those with disabilities. In spite of the past successes resulting from these positions, these assumptions are actually barriers to "best practice" implementation. Works by Skrtic (1987, 1991), Minnow (1988, 1990), Sarason (1990), and Shellecty (1990) posit that current structures and restructuring efforts are deeply embedded within assumptions that, if revisited, would most likely not be embraced. It is an analysis of philosophic assumptions that has in part supported past practices and must accompany current restructuring and "best practice" efforts. Current positions of the different person and the entitlement or rights perspective will be discussed along with the dilemma their use appears to have created. An alternative perspective, one of social relations, is then proposed and is used to guide solutions for two common difficulties in serving children who may be challenged with severe difficulties.

A Review of Two Philosophic Perspectives

Many scholars, including Rawls (1971), Blatt, Biklen, and Bogden (1977), Sarason and Doris (1979), Gould (1981), Douglas (1986), and Hahn (1987) have discussed the implications of viewing any disability as solely a difference. This perspective, called here the "different person perspective," holds that

differences reside within a person and are inherent and immutable. Its implications within services for students with disabilities still linger. Diagnostic tests and practices designed to discover this inherent difference as well as separate services, separate classrooms and separate schools are remnants of the best intentions of this perspective.

A second perspective, the "rights perspective," as it is called here, holds that at least initially, all people must be viewed as people that are the same. That is, as people they are entitled to the same rights and privileges, services, and outcomes as others in spite of their differences. Although this perspective initially ignores the differences, it revisits and affirms differences in order to advocate for appropriate services. Thus, both the rights perspective and the different person perspective, result in what is termed by Minnow (1990) as the dilemma of differences. This dilemma is epitomized as a struggle to treat people differently, without stigmatizing them, or a struggle to treat them the same, without denying them assistance. Each perspective raises a serious question and results in a dilemma: when does providing special services in schools emphasize the differences of the children and, thus, stigmatize and hinder them on that basis? When does providing the same services and treating students the same become insensitive to their differences and, thus, stigmatize or hinder them on that basis?

The continual use of these perspectives to drive and shape, even in part, current restructuring and best practice efforts need to be questioned. The problems of inequality in education can be

exacerbated by both treating individuals as members of a category (e.g., ability level, race, gender, language type, or religion) the same as members of the majority and by treating them as inherently different. Consider the proponents and opponents of inclusion. In most cases, where the argument for or against this new best practice is discussed, the dilemma of differences emerges. The result of partial integration is poignantly described by Schnorr (1990) where other students describe a student with disabilities only as "Peter, he comes and he goes." The full-inclusion result for a student Rachael (Board of Education of Sacramento v. Holland, 1992) although positive, still carries with it a stigma. In making its decision the court focused on the learning needs of Rachael (academic and nonacademic) and potential detriments of Rachael's presence to others. In effect, Rachael was viewed as the same as other students in terms of having a legal right to education, but as inherently different from all other students in terms of her learning needs. What isn't addressed in either the court case or these philosophical perspectives are the different and similar learning needs of Rachael's classmates. If a student named Rachael can benefit from this placement, how can teachers collaborate to ensure all students benefit from a new class composition? If Rachael needs adaptations, is she the only student who could benefit from changes in how learning is enhanced? These later questions can be more readily addressed within a new perspective.

A New Perspective and
Its Implications

This discussion about philosophy is not an attempt to choose between the rights or different person perspective, or to deny that each has offered support for needed changes and services for many. The services afforded students in the above cases are seen as positive. They are also seen as limiting. What is being questioned is the continual use of these assumptions in driving and supporting current and future changes in services and best practices. A way out is discussed by social relations philosophers; it is a challenge to our assumptions about the existence of an objective, neutral perspective, and a challenge to the existence of majority norms, status quo, and solely intrinsic differences.

What are the assumptions? The perspective of social relations (drawn from theories developed and expanded since the 1920s) assumes that there are similarities between people (as does the rights and different person perspective). It also rejects social organizations that categorize relationships and characteristics in immutable categories, fixed status, and inherited or ascribed traits. Within this perspective, we assume that people live, talk, and know in relationships and time. Thus, differences are understood as relationships and are meaningful only in terms of comparison. These relationships (and whether they are valued or devalued) are expected to change with time and historical perspective. The relations are also expected to change as the comparison changes on some trait or in relation to some norm. One is short only in comparison to tall and one may be non-

ambulatory only in comparison to people in environments without ramps and wide entrances. Thus, this approach challenges the belief that differences reside totally within a person or group and offers the view that programs, laws, codes and regulations, and best practices should be designed by encompassing the connectedness of each group on an issue. An example, where the category of gender was initially used to design a program, and then reconstructed using the social relations philosophy, is offered to clarify the use of this perspective.

Maternity leave was the subject of a number of law suits in the 1980s. The rights perspective might support maternity leave because of a woman's right to work. The different person perspective might support the leave because women are different from men and, thus, should have this special privilege. Both perspectives could result in women being stigmatized as different (too different to be hired for jobs) or result in standards that ignore differences (equate workers and satisfactory performance with norms established historically by males). A case on this issue which clearly differentiates itself in its use of the social relations perspective (Minnow, 1988) discussed the difficulties with focusing on gender as the controversy and discussed the outcomes that result when the focus is upon connectedness between employees. A decision to establish parental leaves and allow women, as well as men, to have families without losing jobs was the result. This idea could be expanded to allow employees to take a family leave to care for infants, adopted children, mates, and elderly parents. In addition to its innovative focus on social

relations, rather than gender differences, this court addressed the issue of comparison of some group to the majority, or a norm, and the difficulty with leaving a norm based on differences in place. In this case, leaving the male employee norm in place would make women and pregnancy different by comparison and would emphasize the power of the norm group in establishing policies, procedures, and practices. This same dependence on a norm (general education as the status quo) and the resulting design of best practices based on differences are what courts and some researchers are relying on to support and research inclusion and other innovative practices. Couldn't this in part account for difficulties in gaining wide-spread implementation? Couldn't this reliance on the rights and different person perspective partially account for the mainstreaming of students with mild challenges to be referred to as "dumping?" Isn't this later perspective more resonant with school restructuring and the education of all children? A review of inclusion might highlight a needed shift in perspectives.

The proponents of inclusion and integration (see Giangreco and Putnam, 1991, for a review) note positive outcomes when implementation includes specially designed instruction, structured and unstructured social contact, and a feeling of ownership by the general education teacher for the student with severe disabilities. Both proponents and opponents note that certain classroom environments are not optimal, and those that are usually have a cooperative learning climate, use a variety of curricular approaches (adapted, multilevel, or overlapping curriculum), and use people resources in a coordinated and collaborative. Even in

optimal classroom environments, the difference of the student with the disability remains a focus, and the connectedness of this student with other students remains unaddressed. In effect, this type of inclusion or integration will continue to stigmatize students with severe disabilities and reinforce a ceiling effect on the positive outcomes achieved and hoped for. This "portable" (Roncker v. Walter, 1983) service delivery description reaffirms the status quo of general education, distinct and different perspectives of special education, distinct and different perspectives of general education, distinct and different perspectives of general and special education, and the current organization/structure of general education as natural and permanent. Some practitioners and families do question this status quo and ask: Why would I want to send my student/child to this classroom when I don't think any student should have to learn that way? Others are questioning a model which relies on more resources at a time of stringent reductions (Ferguson, Baumgart, Meyer, 1992). The two examples below exemplify what can happen when teachers and families collaborate and review the needs of all students within a social relations perspective. The primary challenges addressed were first, resources and staffing and, second, meeting students' needs based on strengths and weaknesses of all children.

A school district in a western state made a commitment to serve all its students within the district and began the process of serving students within district and neighborhood schools. One elementary school was observed during this process by a team of

researchers, including one author of this paper. During the summer, class assignments had been organized so that all students would be able to begin the day in a general education homeroom, based on their chronological age. A special educator had been hired to assist in implementing inclusion, and teachers had attended workshops on inclusion and collaboration. Throughout the year, I observed a group of fifth graders as they problem solved on issues and observed in their classrooms as they implemented various ideas. One issue that arose early in the year was the number of interruptions that occurred with students being "pulled out" and "included." Teachers felt these transitions were disruptive to the class as a whole and to the individual students who moved. A second issue was the lack of "special" ownership of students receiving special services. The specialized staff felt that they were "just tutoring" kids and that they were not effective in assisting students to adjust to large group instruction. A third issue was raised by one of the fifth grade teachers. She discussed eight students in her classroom who were all "very disruptive," and she needed assistance with these students "more than" she needed assistance with students receiving special education or Chapter One services. The three teachers, two general education fifth grade teachers, and a special education "self-contained" teacher, realized after various discussions that moving students in and out was based on labels and past practices. Since these movements were identified as problems anyway, they brainstormed on how to deliver instruction based on the needs of all kids to learn and remain members of this fifth grade community. By mid-October

the teachers had designed an instructional pilot plan that was implemented between November and mid-January. The students in special education, including those with severe disabilities, and all students in the fifth grade classrooms were regrouped. The students started the day in their assigned homerooms and then, for the the next two instructional hours, were assigned to one of four heterogeneous groups of 8-12 students who rotated through instruction conducted by a fifth grade teacher, the special education teacher from the former "self-contained" room, and an instructional aide. Students received instruction in one of the fifth grade classrooms, the now vacant special education classroom, and the computer lab. The settlement of the early colonies was the instructional content, and each group spent 30 minutes in each of the rooms building a three-dimensional replica of a colonial settlement, designing and crafting early-American home furnishings, studying the settlement laws and rewriting laws for their colony using calligraphy, and writing out a daily journal on their project in the computer lab. The teaching expertise was available to the students during the rotation as before (30 minutes of special education per student), opportunities for social interaction and community membership were enhanced, behavioral disruptions were minimized with the dispersal of the eight into different groups and with small class sizes, all teachers taught, all students made gains, and movements of students did not disrupt teaching. In this instance the discovery of an unnecessary organizational norm for delivering services, the collaboration of teachers prompted by the district "inclusion" mandate, and the need

for all teachers to own teaching prompted these teachers to design an innovative plan to serve all students. None of the students were "pulled out," all students' membership needs were acknowledged, and all student outcomes were enhanced within this social relations perspective for designing instruction.

A second example is the provision of bilingual/bicultural education by elementary school personnel in a rural western district. Rather than designate the new influx of Hispanic students as "different" because they did not speak and comprehend English, all elementary students were viewed in terms of their differences (speaking different languages and having different cultures from each other) and in terms of their connectedness and similarities (all could benefit from learning a second language). The services for the first year were designed so that all students could learn a second language. English was used for instruction in the morning and Spanish was used for instruction in the afternoon. The addition of a second language to the curriculum had been requested in the past, but until the influx of Spanish speaking students, this had not been affordable. In this example the structure and provision of services was within a social relations perspective and provided a contrast in its structure to typical pull-out bilingual/bicultural education models and in its benefits to all students.

In summary, the social relations theory provides another perspective upon which to design and implement services. In many ways this perspective resonates well with school reform and restructuring advocates who question the current structures of schools and their hierarchical, categorical organization. Whether

or not researchers and practitioners identify and reflect upon this perspective may be a critical factor in whether reforms and best practices, excellence, and equity are finally realized to a greater extent in public education . . . for all children.

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