

What Makes a School Inclusive?

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Abstract

School is a social institution with clear goals. One would think that processes inside different schools should be similar. As early as in the XV century Ioannis Amos Comenius called school a place for “teaching all things to all men”, where “entire youth of both sexes, none being excepted, shall quickly, pleasantly and thoroughly become learned in the science, pure in morals, trained in piety and in this manner instructed in all things necessary for the present and for the future life”. The attitudes about school and education changed multiply since then. What is the first thing that comes to mind when asked about your personal experience at school?

I've been fortunate to see many Russian schools since 2016, when I started off as a behaviour analyst working in school projects. There were no two similar ones among them. Schools are different from one another just like people are. Each school is unique in its culture, values, rules and interaction habits. But I noticed one interesting thing: as soon as there is a resource room or inclusive class opens at a school, something starts to change. Inclusive schools become very similar in some respects. Could be the opposite, of course, when nothing changes, despite of all the effort. In my talk I would like to elaborate on “ingredients”, which once present, get the school closer to this idea, to “teach all things to all”, that is teach each person what they need to be taught. I will also speak of the barriers we might come across in this kind of work.