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## The pleonasm of inclusive education

Children with special needs require not only specialized attention, but also a “normal” school environment

Don't you think that children with special needs should continue to be educated by special schools? This was one of the questions I received during a virtual lecture I gave some days ago to a private school network. The web spectator was a teacher in Barbacena, Minas Gerais. She concluded her question by arguing that most of schools are not prepared to receive children with such particular needs.

The concept of an inclusive education has not arisen by chance. It is the result of a number of reflections, experiences and learnings guided by the idea that every human being has the right to be treated as an equal. Does this mean that every child should receive the same type of attention? Not always. Treating as an equal is not synonymous with treating equally. In the case of a child with a type of deficiency, there appears to be no doubt that there is a need for specialized attention, conducted by capable professionals. The model recently adopted by our Secretary of Education expects this to happen in “normal” classes, in order to make sure that the child also has the right to attend a regular classroom and enjoy the benefits and challenges of it. Therefore, it is not about substitution, but aggregation.

Obviously, we are talking about a delicate approach, whose implementation is extremely complex. Mere generalizations do not solve the problem. However, if we are in fact committed to the ideal of equality, this debate cannot be postponed. And why does this affect us all? We have to ask ourselves how we would be, today, if we had been deprived from contact with the environment of a

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“normal” school in our childhood. Or, on the other hand, if we would be better prepared for life in a plural society if we had naturally interacted with children of every nature, on a daily basis. As my friend Lino de Macedo says, in the 21st century, an inclusive education should be a pleonasm.