



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Best practice

Making school more inclusive through cooperation

Section of the module / R

Contact : Olivier Paolini

Président de l'OCCE de l'Aude (Office Central de la Coopération à l'École)
Specialized school teacher in Narbonne – olivierpaolini@yahoo.fr



1/ COOPERATION

In France, schooling and including pupils with disabilities are issues of justice and rights. Many of them are still being discriminated and their reception among the school of the French Republic is problematic. Deinstitutionalization remains a concept difficult to materialize in professional practices and the influence of the medico-social sector on disability is still very strong. Field actors have the opportunity to change mentalities and the current segregative system by developing **cooperations** in order to break the current boundaries drawn by the existence of specialized institutions.

The six cooperative relationships described in this fact sheet are as many necessary pillars to support inclusive school building.

=> you are invited to read the best practice sheet: "Cooperating toward a better inclusion through artistic and cultural practices - The Odyssey show" which explains through the example of a pedagogical project how it is quite possible to build bridges and mix children populations in order to develop artistic and cultural practices for all.

2/ Context :

In France, inclusion means equal rights for everyone

The legislative framework for the schooling of pupils with disabilities has evolved over the past few years. Following the law dated February 11th, 2005 which poses the right to schooling for all students with disabilities, inclusive school advocated since the law named Refounding the Republic's School of 2013 has led to a systemic change.

This change in our school is a shift in vision that reverses the principle of special education to make education accessible to everyone. Teaching professionals and local stakeholders involved need to refurbish their practices to reflect these changes. However, a number of representations and obstacles still prevent schooling pupils with disabilities, especially autistic children and adolescents.

Handling disability and more specifically schooling pupils with disabilities is now part of a historical development that has led to the concept of inclusion. Inclusion is "*the action of including something in a whole, a set; it's the state of something that is included within something else.*"¹. The notion of *inclusion* is opposed to that of *exclusion*. Its goal is therefore including all pupils regardless of their difference and signifying equal rights for everyone.

In the wake of international treaties², the French legislator has therefore chosen to initiate a transition to build an inclusive society. Today, the law is allowing it. However, it is not sufficiently applied and we note that truly inclusive public policies are struggling to develop, that our education system is still very constrained and that the lack of training – within society and particularly among teachers - to the problems of disability prevents an extensive implementation.

Several questions arise when we consider inclusion as a given of the equation. How can field actors act nevertheless? How to make a world more accessible for people with a different functioning? How to adapt our school to make it more accessible to different pupils? Can cooperation be a relevant work hypothesis? Can it be a lever to break down the rigid barriers of our still very compartmentalized school system and change this situation?

The problem of MEIs (Medial-Educational Institute): how to break down the barriers of segregation?

In France, schooling disabled children in ordinary schools is recommended. However, implementation is still problematic because of the organization of the education system, the lack of teacher training and the lack of adequate support. The reception of children and adolescents with mental handicap, autistic or with several disabilities is often favored within the social and medico-social establishments.

One cannot be satisfied with this situation, which excludes a significant number of people from society.

Therefore, based on these observations, how can specialized institutions and schools be brought

¹ <http://www.larousse.fr>

² *Déclaration de Salamanque et cadre d'action pour l'éducation et les besoins spéciaux* de juin 1994 et *Convention relative aux droits des personnes handicapées des Nations Unies* du 13 décembre 2006.

together to better include children and teenagers in ordinary schools? How to build adapted educational support based on the results of scientific research?

3 / Goal

As a specialized teacher working in MEIs, my reflection led me to ponder on our practices and especially on project pedagogy which seems particularly interesting for me to work about **cooperation**.

For Philippe Perrenoud³, a **project approach**:

- « *is a collective enterprise managed by the group of pupils.*
- *is aiming at a concrete production in the broad sense.*
- *is inducing a set of tasks in which all pupils can get involved and play an active role that can vary according to their means and interests.*
- *is promoting the learning of the knowledge and know-how of project management (deciding, planning, coordinating,...).*
- *is promoting at the same time identifiable learning (at least afterwards) in the curriculum of one or more disciplines ».*

Therefore, implementing **projects pedagogy**⁴ can be an excellent work support to foster the missing openness among specialized institutions and to create the conditions of their rapprochement with the ordinary environment.

There is a real educational challenge in bringing two separate worlds closer together: that of National Education with that of the medico-social sector. Through projects, by mixing populations, we can create this rapprochement that the French political system has not yet organized. By breaking the boundaries, we will allow children and youth with disabilities to progress and we will remove barriers to change the way we look at them and behave so we can learn to live better together. Thus inter-institutional projects can create bridges for these meetings to take place. School cooperation therefore has a central role to play in our society, which seeks to become more inclusive.

Cooperating for a better inclusion

³ Perrenoud Philippe, *Apprendre à l'école à travers des projets : pourquoi ? Comment ?*. Éducateur, n° 14, décembre 2002.

⁴ Dossier d'actualité veille et analyses, Institut Français de l'Éducation (Ifé), n°82, février 2013.

Sylvain Connac, Ph.D. in Education, lecturer at the Paul Valéry University in Montpellier and fervent defender of cooperative pedagogy, gives the following definition⁵: "*Cooperating means acting together with others, doing together, producing together*".

Alain Marchive's work also highlighted *cooperative action* based on four foundations: *assistance, mutual aid, group work* and *tutoring*.

- Assistance: The expert helps the person who needs it.
- Mutual aid: Peers associate to solve a problem.
- Group work: Peers associate, with each of them having a predefined role to solve a problem.
- Tutoring: The recognized expert helps a person, for a specific time and purpose, to become independent.

Cooperation is opposed to *competition* which is "*the action of seeking to obtain at the same time as others the same title, the same charge or dignity, the same function ...*"⁶.

Co-operating means in the literal sense operating together, which is "*participating in a common work*". Cooperating is also a "*method of action by which individuals or families with common interests constitute an enterprise in which the rights of everyone are equal and the profit made is distributed among the sole partners in proportion to their participation in the membership activity*".

There are therefore mutual *benefits* to turn to account from cooperation in a human relationship. Each individual engaged in a dynamic of cooperation will take advantage of the benefits of the common work, which will be distributed equitably among the participants. Researchers in cooperative pedagogy have focused their work primarily on student learning.

The six pillars of cooperation to make school inclusive⁷

The challenge of an inclusive society is to bring together all the children, whatever their singularity, within school. However, some needs require human support and / or specific equipment. Without belittling its importance, the multiplicity of actors involved in the field of disability makes our individual action capacity more complex. It forces us to think collectively and act in a coordinated way.

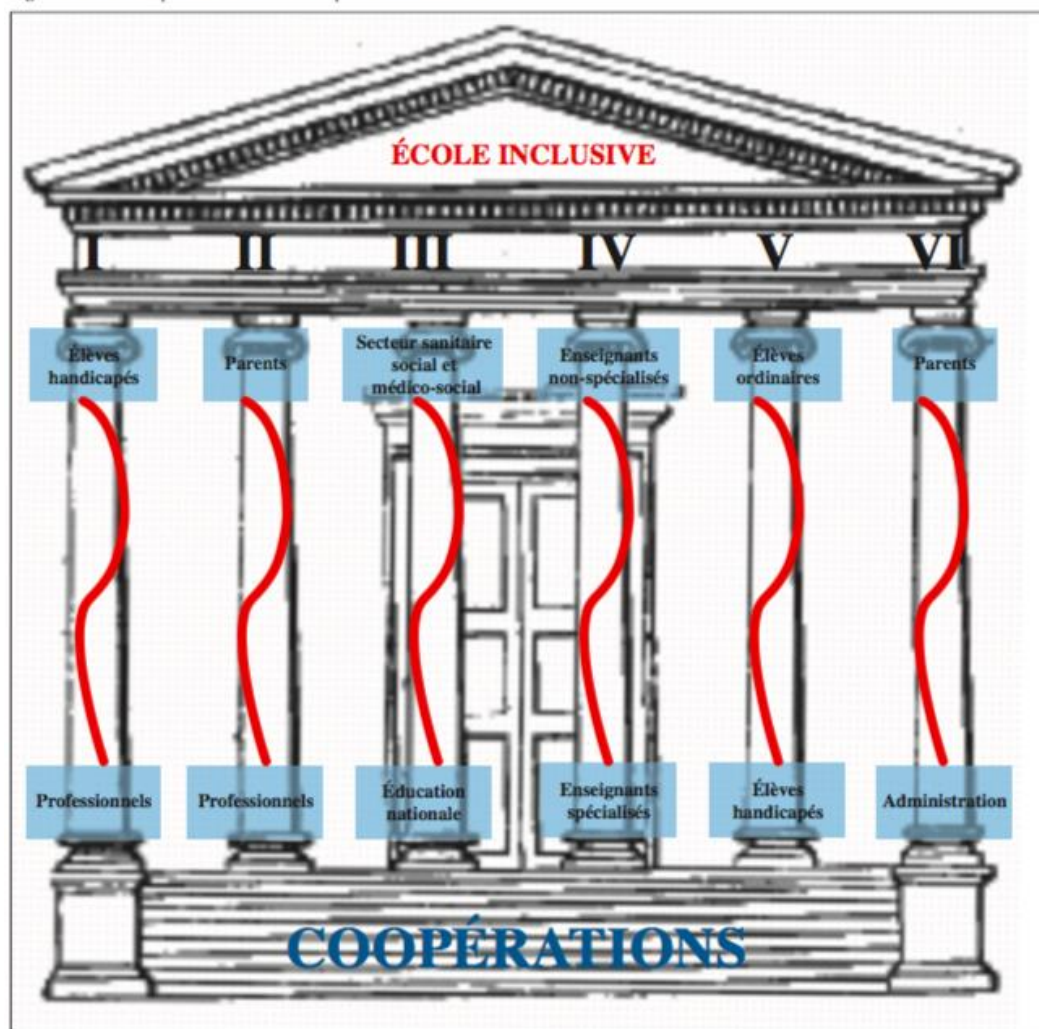
As six pillars supporting the building of the Republic's school, six cooperations seem to be fundamental in order to progress towards the inclusive school:

⁵ Connac Sylvain, *Apprendre avec les pédagogies coopératives. Démarches et outils pour l'école*, Paris, ESF éditeur, collection pédagogies (2009).

⁶ <http://www.larousse.fr>

⁷ PAOLINI, O. (2017). *Coopérer pour rendre l'école plus inclusive*. A.N.A.E.n°150, novembre - décembre 2017.

Figure 1. Les six coopérations fondamentales pour rendre l'école inclusive.



Within each column, if one of the two partners does not cooperate, access to inclusive school will weaken the pillar. If one or more pillars is fragile or absent, then access to school will be compromised.

Pillar I – Cooperation between professionals and children or adolescents with disabilities.

Pillar II – Cooperation between professionals and parents.

Pillar III – Cooperation between the Ministry for National Education and the health, social and medico-social sector.

Pillar IV – Cooperation between specialized and non-specialized teachers.

Pillar V – Cooperation between ordinary students and students with disabilities.

Pillar VI – Cooperation between the administration and parents of children or adolescents avec disabilities.

4/ Limitations:

Breaking down barriers between institutions that have different ways of functioning and compartmented administrations is difficult because it goes against established organizations and habits for many years. Connecting with parents to achieve co-education with them is also a primary purpose.

The challenge of inclusive society is to succeed in bringing together cultures and forging cooperative relationships between people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Accepting cooperation means considering other people, recognizing him / her as competent and building a relationship of trust with him / her. It is an equilibrium relationship that is sometimes difficult to implement as the issues can sometimes be complex. The learning of the "letting go" posture is necessary and it is a personal requirement of every moment.

5 / Prospects:

Allowing medico-social institutions' personnel to work with teachers in ordinary schools promotes bridging. It is indeed essential that both cultures come closer together. Getting to know one another makes it possible to consider outsourcing teaching units within mainstream schools and moving towards inclusion.