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Hervé Benoit

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**Hervé Benoit, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>**

Associate Professor in Education Sciences  
Researcher in the Grhapes (UR 7287)  
Paris Lumières University – INSHEA, Suresnes, France

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: INSTITUTIONAL AND CONCEPTUAL RESISTANCES

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze, using international literature on the subject, the different types of resistance on the part of educational systems today to implementing inclusive education. This study seeks to produce, with a view toward a subsequent research project, the initial elements for a renewed understanding of these resistances to the inclusion of students at every level of education. The methodological framework is that of an exploratory meta-synthesis referring to the “synthesis of the results of several qualitative studies to create a new interpretation” (Finfgeld, 2003). The following will be examined successively: first, the existence of analyzers of institutional resistances; then the robustness of conceptual tools to design and implement inclusive education; and finally the tendencies to distort the principle of inclusion. One form of such distortion can be the use of inclusive language to disguise the reproduction of prior practices of segregation.

**Keywords:** educational systems; inclusion; inclusive education; resistances; segregation.

### 1. Introduction

On the one hand, the paradigm of inclusive education has been discussed in many publications at the international level, which made it possible to identify major pedagogical and institutional challenges. Parallel to this research, the positions adopted by UNESCO in the *Statement of Salamanca*, the *World Education Forum* in Dakar, Senegal, and the *Policy Guidelines for Inclusion in Education* (1994, 2000, 2005, 2009) have drawn support from many countries in the world which now claim that they have integrated inclusivity as an objective in their public educational policies, even if changes remain varied, as they depend on the specific social and cultural context of each country. In 1996 the European Union created the *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education*, which has now become *European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*. As a result, inclusive education has been durably established at the heart of the European Union’s educational policy. A vast programme for training teachers in taking into account the diversity of students from the early stages of schooling (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011) was launched during the years following 2010. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that educational systems oppose resistance to adopting the new inclusive paradigm, in terms of pedagogical practices and institutional functioning as well as dominant social representations. The managerial habits based on a compartmentalized conception of functioning and responsibilities within educational systems indeed constitute a real danger: the principle of universality might be distorted. The objective of general

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail: [hervé.benoit@inshea.fr](mailto:hervé.benoit@inshea.fr)

accessibility to educational systems could lose its universal content if the principle of educational inclusion were to be practiced on the basis of purely pragmatic casuistry. This casuistic approach consists in judging, on a case-by-case basis, whether or not compensatory assistance is effective for a given student, and on these grounds deciding whether the disabled child's capacity for adaptation is sufficient for him to attend mainstream schools. For example, the conditional nature of admission of young disabled persons to mainstream schools, and the fact that admission is subordinated to compensation for disabilities, can become barriers to inclusion (Benoit, 2018, p. 91), and thus represent a step backward in the integrative process.

The objective of this article is to analyze, using international literature on the subject, the different types of resistance on the part of educational systems today to implementing inclusive education. This study seeks to produce, with a view toward a subsequent research project, the initial elements for a renewed understanding of these resistances to the inclusion of students at every level of education. The methodological framework is that of an exploratory meta-synthesis referring to the "synthesis of the results of several qualitative studies to create a new interpretation" (Finfgeld, 2003, quoted in Beaucher & Jutras, 2007, p. 62). Unlike the meta-synthesis undertaken by Rousseau, Point, Desmarais and Vienneau about conditions favorable and unfavorable to the development of inclusive practices in secondary education (2017), the present study is exploratory as it is not grounded on a systematic collection of research papers in a variety of databases, even though it has a research objective, namely to understand the resistances to educational inclusion on the part of educational systems.

The first question is the following: do the numerous studies in international literature on education and inclusive public policies provide us with reliable and relevant analyzers of what constitutes institutional resistance within educational systems? The second question concerns the robustness of the conceptual tools used to reflect upon, design and implement inclusive education in systems historically founded on norms of selection, guidance, or even exclusion, combined with widespread practices of categorization with respect to disability. The third question seeks to investigate and characterize the forces of distortion.

Such forces can appear in the use of inclusive language to disguise the reproduction of prior practices of segregation<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Defining Analyzers of Institutional Resistances in Educational Systems**

In a *Thematic Publication* entitled *Special Needs Education in Europe*, published in 2003 in the framework of the *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education*, the authors (Eds Meijer, Soriano & Watkins, p.7) devote the very beginning of the first chapter to the *Common characteristics of policies and practices*. There they present an initial typology, taken up by Champollion in 2007, which is useful as it lays the groundwork for a comparative approach to the European educational systems in the way they educate young disabled persons. This analysis allows us to characterize, in terms of structure, the varied and often multifaceted functioning of educational systems:

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<sup>1</sup> This notion of "forces of distortion" is taken from the book of the jurist Georges Ripert, mentioned by Paul Roubier (1955) in *Les forces créatrices du droit*, in which are analyzed "economic or religious forces which work either in a conservative or a reforming direction", when laws are created, but also when they are put into practice.

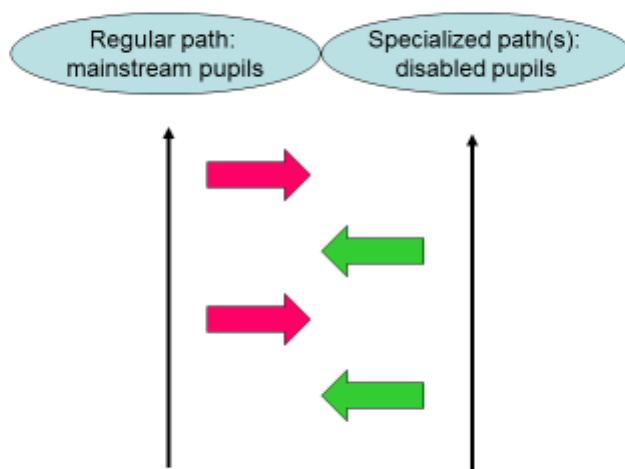
- “Countries can be grouped into three categories according to their policy on including pupils with special educational needs:
  - The first category (one-track approach) includes countries that develop policy and practices geared towards the inclusion of almost all pupils within mainstream education.
  - The countries belonging to the second category (multi-track approach) have a multiplicity of approaches to inclusion. They offer a variety of services between the two systems (i.e. mainstream and special needs education systems).
  - In the third category (two-track approach), there are two distinct education systems. Pupils with special educational needs are usually placed in special schools or special classes. In general, a majority of pupils officially registered as having special educational needs do not follow the mainstream curriculum with their non-disabled peers”.

In addition to the distinction between three types of public educational policies, this approach highlights the fact that educational systems are most often affected by an internal binary opposition between two terms, (1) *mainstream* and (2) *special needs education systems*, which refers to what could be called educational dualism, in the sense that we speak of socioeconomic dualism (Benoit, 2008, p. 100), or legal dualism<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, we can consider that the third category, the multitrack approach, does not exist as such, but represents one mode of functioning of the two track approach, in which separate structures are multiplied and specialized with a “cascading effect” (Gottlieb, 1981). This mode of functioning consists in offering young disabled persons a broad range of gradual measures and services as methods of structural rather than pedagogical differentiation (Pelgrims, 2019, p. 45).

This general context of educational dualism, based on the coexistence of special education classes and institutions on the one hand, and ordinary educational structures on the other, is the starting point for integrative bridges and collaborative structures between separate branches and the common curriculum. The purpose is to allow some young persons, to whom “sufficient” adaptive capacities are attributed, to join classmates temporarily in mainstream education cycles (Chauvière & Plaisance, 2008, p. 42) or to enable them, for example in Brazil, to meet their classmates in multifunctional spaces (Chacon & Oliveira, 2013). On the one hand, the special needs education system uses for its own purposes the mainstream path as a place for socialization in the framework of a specialized educational path. On the other hand, the possibility for integration is reserved to pupils who, at the end of a remedial or rehabilitation program, can prove they are able to adapt to a mainstream environment. The focus is thus on the pupil as a distinct individual with personal disorders. The functioning of the mainstream system is not directly called into question in terms of its capacity to consider the variety of individual needs of all pupils. This educational dualism can be modeled in the following way (Benoit, 2014a, p. 535).

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<sup>1</sup> Legal dualism consists of a division of law, public and private law into two main branches. Some jurists question the validity of this distinction. Educational dualism entails a division between mainstream education and special education.



**Figure 1:** Pupils Moving Back and Forth between Specialized Path(s) and the Mainstream Path

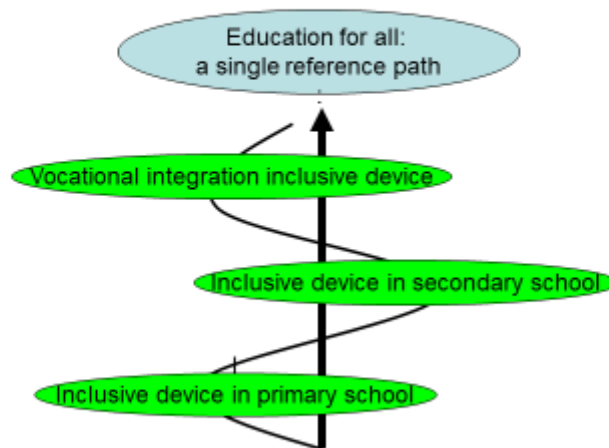
The status of student integrated in a mainstream educational system may be described as educational insecurity (Benoit, 2012, p. 70; 2014c). This is because this status shows a double isomorphism<sup>1</sup> in the way it functions, comparable to that of a worker with insecure job (employed under fixed-term contract) and also to that of a foreign immigrant in a host country. The immigrant lives under the threat of being deported from the host country (in the case of the student, removed from a mainstream school) if he does not prove his capacity to adapt (for example, by speaking the language of the host country correctly). The young disabled person’s “native land” is the one that defines the borders of specialized institutions in France, special schools in Europe and the rest of the world, or integrated special classes in mainstream schools. All of these are reference places and true “home port” for the disabled student or student in difficulty. It is from these home bases that he begins an “integrative trip”, and where, in the event of a problem, he returns. Indeed, it is to these places that the system assigns to him his legal educational address, in other words the roots of his specific identity. The integrated young disabled person’s educational insecurity can lead to an insecure identity.

From the viewpoint of educational inclusion, the approach no longer consists of asking the young disabled person to meet mainstream standards or giving him access to “liminal” space (Murphy, 1988, 1990; Saint Martin, 2016). The approach is rather to challenge the educational system about its capacity to take into account the diversity of special needs of all students, in particular when those needs are linked to a deficiency, disorder or disease. Here we have the opposite perspective, in which the young disabled person acquires what could be called “mainstream citizenship”. This means he is no longer a visitor or guest foreigner, but a full-

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<sup>1</sup> The term “isomorphism” (Benoit, 2005, p. 50; Curchod-Ruedi & Doudin, 2013, p. 236) is originally a mathematical concept meaning that each element of a set corresponds to an element of another set, each one of these elements respectively playing the same role in its original set. The transposition of this notion into linguistic or human systems emphasizes the correspondence of relations inside different systems.

fledged member of the educational community. Here we have a new rationality which seeks to find how to open the way to a mainstream curriculum. In other words, mainstream curricula are made accessible to the disabled student.



**Figure 2:** Organization of the Inclusive Educational Path in and with Reference to the Single Mainstream Educational Path

We can thus conclude this first part by identifying the conscious or unconscious reference to educational dualism as a major barrier to thinking about inclusive education. The organization of the two-track approach is, thus, internalized in the representations of all actors as the expression of an unavoidable dichotomy between the normal and the pathological (Canguilhem, 1966). This dichotomy is an “epistemological obstacle” as it constitutes a resistance to the progress of knowledge and in fact puts a brake on the development of new professional practices.

### 3. Evaluating the Robustness of the Conceptual Tools Mobilized to Reflect upon, Design and Implement Inclusive Education

#### 3.1. The Notion of Special Educational Needs

The two French laws of July 8, 2013<sup>1</sup> (article 1) and July 26, 2019<sup>2</sup> state that the educational system “provides educational inclusion (2013) - inclusive schooling (2019) - to all children with no distinction”, i.e. the system ensures the right to education in a mainstream environment. Since the Statement of Salamanca (1994), the main method for putting these principles into practice has consisted in responding and adapting to the special education needs of the students concerned. To summarize, the current public educational policies in France, but

<sup>1</sup> Law n° 2013-595, July 8, guidance and programming for the re-foundation of the School of the Republic: Journal Officiel, n° 0157, July 9, 2013, p. 11379.

<sup>2</sup> Law n° 2019-791, July 26, 2019, for an Education of Confidence: Journal Officiel, n° 0174 July. 2019.

also in most countries of the OECD, define inclusive schooling as a goal and present the response to the special educational needs of disabled students (or non-disabled students) as the lever to make their action operational (Benoit, 2020).

Opinions are far from unanimous about the scientific relevance and social utility of the notion of special educational needs, and some researchers have pointed out that it is a pre-notion, in the sense used by Durkheim. In other words, it is a concept deriving from practice which arose “outside of science and for needs that have nothing scientific about them” (Durkheim, 1977, p. 40). Moreover, Ebersold and Detraux (2013), along with other researchers, in particular in Italy (D’Alessio, 2009; Medeghini et al., 2012; Vadalà et al., 2013; Ianes et Demo, 2013), believe that these needs are not part of the inclusive paradigm, as they focus on deficiencies to be compensated for and are based on a diagnostic approach to the student taken in isolation. In this sense, the evaluation of needs is paradoxically viewed as fostering educational dualism by isolating vulnerable groups in segregated educational places (Ebersold & Dupont, 2019 p. 68)

As of the 1980s, the classifications of diseases, influenced by the dominant medical discourse of repercussion/remediation of the ICDH<sup>1</sup> (WHO, 1980) were established not only in the field of health but also in that of pedagogical and educational practices and even in the sciences of education, where the concept of (mental, physical,...) disorder took a significant place. These factors led to combining the notion of disorder with that of special educational needs, which resulted in a split and hybridization of the concept of needs. From then on, needs were most often considered to be inherent in the given student, as these needs were seen as a compensation for the repercussion of the student’s disorder. Such rationality based on “disorder” thus strengthened the idea that knowledge of the diagnosis and the invariants characterizing the student should in principle determine both the nature of the student’s needs and the choice of adapted measures. This very same rationality, moreover, tends to overlook the social determinants, as they are somehow blended into a discourse about needs viewed as inherent in the individual and stemming from his pathology. Needs are thus essentialized (Benoit, 2020, p. 74).

Over the past 10 years, however, we have witnessed the development of a new approach to “situated needs” (Benoit, 2014b, p. 197), developed in particular in the framework of the network of researchers of the OPHRIS<sup>2</sup> and the inclusion of didactic accessibility. It marked a return to the meaning that Warnock initially gave to educational needs in his report of 1978, and thus freed itself from medical rationality by moving away from the notion of compensatory response to presumed repercussions of a disorder (Plaisance, 2012). The idea is that “situated needs can thus be identified by the teachers, who can then adapt situations to these needs. To be sure, a priori analyses of the needs of disabled students and teaching situations are necessary, but the purpose is rather to set up a didactic process between the analysis of needs and the analysis of situations” (Assude, 2019, p. 17). This approach is based on the fact that the pathological and the normal have much in common. Besides, the skills lacked by an individual are always closely linked to specific areas of activity and experience (Vergnaud, 2004, p. 9), and linked much less to whatever we might know about the nature of the disorder and the individual characteristics of the person. A student encounters a barrier in learning or in his family or social life. The result is a need for mediation, which is precisely constitutive of a special educational need (Benoit, 2008, p. 102, 2012, p. 75). This educational need, which could be designated by the term “barrier-need”, is thus not considered as existing prior to the teaching-learning situation. It is rather the product of the interactions that characterize this situation, and

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<sup>1</sup> International Classification of Impairments, disabilities and Handicaps, in force until 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Observatory of practices related to disability: research and educational action.

is not inherent in the student. For the teacher, therefore, the aim is to adjust accessibility to learning tasks on the basis of observing how these tasks actually develop in a concrete situation. An approach of this type is structured around the barriers encountered by the student in his learning environment, barriers that the teacher acts upon to make the environment more accessible. This approach thereby seeks to become a strong factor in non-discriminatory professional teaching practices. It is in fact in keeping with the universal design enshrined by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), as needs identified in a given situation, or situated needs, could function as an incubator for making learning accessible to all, thus eliminating any danger of stigmatization or segregation.

The same approach is developed by Thomazet (2012, p. 16) when he conditions “the change to schooling for all, called inclusive schooling” on the capacity of the educational system to “place the concept of special educational needs on the terrain of schooling”. Referring to the recommendations of the Warnock report, Thomazet recommends taking into account “the needs of the students in the school and not the origin of their difficulties” (*ibid.*, p.11). He adds that the concept of needs could constitute a powerful lever for change if applied no longer to students, but to schools themselves. In this, he states: “Moving from the needs of the child to the needs of the school requires going beyond the integrative paradigm (...) to question the organization of schools so as to make them able to meet the needs of all students who attend them” (*ibid.* p. 16).

This apparent contradiction between the two understandings of special needs in education does not in fact stem from an epistemological antagonism, but rather from the choice of perspective, partly determined by the scientific analytical framework. The sociological framework seeks to reveal the differentiating and discriminating aspect of the special educational needs in that they objectively favor mechanisms of social exclusion. On the contrary, the framework of the sciences of education focuses on the operational qualities of the other side of the same concept. That is, it allows teachers to reflect upon and create schools accessible to all, without recourse to medical categories and educational segregation, with an ecological and educationally situated conception of the learning difficulties encountered by students (Benoit, 2020, p. 78). Eliminating this ambiguity is one of the preconditions for a robust concept for researchers, and can help practitioners in the field to overcome the dilemmas they face when carrying out their inclusive mission.

### 3.2. *The Notion of Assessment*

In 2007 the European Agency examined the question of the assessment of needs in the context of inclusive education (Watkins, 2007). The expected results of this project were to determine, with experts from the 23 countries represented, the conditions under which educational systems could move “toward an inclusive method of assessment” (p. 49). One of the main conclusions of the Agency’s work on this was to show that the assessment practices with respect to young disabled persons most often consisted in identifying needs in terms of rehabilitation or therapeutic actions in a remedial or compensatory perspective. The aim of these actions was to remedy the disorders of these persons and to reduce them, at the expense of an assessment in the educational framework of needs from the point of view of learning. The Agency emphasized the risks of segregation, and the use of the rationality of educational dualism deriving from the medical origin of an approach centered on deficiencies or pathologies. The approach recommended by the Agency was, on the contrary, to take into account the pedagogical context in which the student’s difficulties arose. The actions in support of learning, combined with the assessment of the strengths and resources of the learner, were preferred to resorting to special measures, or even to directing the student toward segregated educational structures.



### *3.3. The Notion of Inclusion as Faced with the Dichotomy between Compensation and Accessibility: The Ever-Present Danger of Educational Dualism*

The collective effort toward greater accessibility, which aims at the environment, and the attribution of compensations, which responds to the individual's specific incapacities, are not in a relationship of balance, like two trays on a scale. They are linked by an inversely proportional relationship. Indeed, a deficit of accessibility leads to more compensation, and to the danger of stigmatization. A deficit of compensation, on the other hand, gives more weight to general considerations and ignores the unique needs of each individual. The problem is therefore less to seek a possible balance between these two policies than to observe the hierarchical relationship between them (Benoit, 2014c, p. 186).

Despite the universal design enshrined by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), the widespread application of standards of selection and guidance in educational systems and the general categorization with respect to disability are combined in many countries. Thus, it may lead to overuse and excessive representation of compensatory practices, especially in technical and human assistance (educational assistants in France, support teachers in Italy, etc.). These assistance providers are generally presented as responses compensating for a personal deficiency, directly or indirectly, aiming at reintegrating the disabled child into the realm of normality. Thus, teaching habits and generally admitted educational standards are not challenged. The "contexts" are neutralized (Vadala, Medeghini, D'Alessio, 2013). The young disabled person's learning difficulties are viewed as the consequence of individual deficiencies impossible to remedy, and not as the result of barriers in the environment. This mechanically leads to the conclusion that "there is no room here for him/her", i.e. the deficiency requires schooling in a separate specialized structure in the framework of educational dualism.

Caught between these two notions, compensation and accessibility, the concept of (educational) inclusion undergoes a split/hybridization on three levels: (1) institutional; (2) terminological; and (3) ethical.

- The concept of inclusion, which implies "a process of transformation of educational systems and cultures" ensuring that all students without restriction receive mainstream schooling (D'Alessio, 2008, p. 36), is turned into a hybrid concept by reductionist discourses and practices. This is illustrated in particular by expressions like "inclusion time" and "partial inclusion" used to characterize moments when disabled students are included in mainstream classes, in contrast to "care time" or "special needs time" in a specialized group. The notion of inclusion is, thus, reduced to that of integration, and is dominated by a discourse on incapacities requiring compensation through supplementary assistance rather than through accessibility to a learning situation (Benoit, 2008, p. 100). The degree to which a student can be integrated and educated thus depends on individual compensation for incapacities, and allows placement of the disabled student in mainstream settings only for limited time and on contractual bases. In statutory terms, the student remains a "stranger" with respect to the mainstream environment.

- This hybridization is supported by the transposition of medical and psychological terms into the vocabulary of inclusive education. They become “talking points” (in the political sense) as far as they constitute a statutory positioning of the professional and a sign of power, a “title of cultural nobility” (Bourdieu, 1979) conferred upon them. Specialized European institutions have become resource centres for mainstream schools (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003), and have imported vocabulary into the world of education related to diagnostic categories of pathologies (autism, psychosis, borderline states ...), behavioural symptoms (depression, frustration, hyperactivity, violence...), or malaise and suffering (Emery, 2014). The dominance of medical-psychological discourse has not only caused academic knowledge to be left out of the discussion, but has also led to a medicalization of the inclusive process at the expense of pedagogical and educational approaches. We have seen that the concept of assessment has become highly ambiguous in this context. As a result, acquired skills and academic progress are given less attention, and psychotherapeutic needs as well as care-providing services designed to meet these needs are privileged.
- From an ethical point of view, we can observe a dichotomy in perspective between two approaches. On the one hand, proponents of a “moral doctrine of total inclusion” - based on equal rights and non-discrimination; and on the other hand advocates of “an ethical approach”, believe that partial inclusion - allowing temporary accommodation of exceptional students in segregated settings - better meets their needs in terms of social-emotional development (Berg et Schneider, 2012). Caught as it were between a moral posture - grounded on the analogy between the common good represented by respect for the universal rights and living experience of the disabled student - and an ethical posture - recommending regulated coordination of specific compensatory care and education, the inclusive objective of accessibility for all to educational systems risks falling into a philosophical aporia, in which the concept of educational inclusion would be confused and deprived of its universal content. Fragmented in this way, the concept of educational inclusion would be updated based on pragmatic sophistry. This casuistic viewpoint would allow to judge, through a case-by-case ethical approach, whether this idea of inclusive education can be realized for all students, as Mary Warnock recently wrote, “under the same roof”, or on the contrary, partially or totally for a few in a specialized and segregated environment.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion: The Forces of Distortion

In France it is the law 2005-102<sup>1</sup> of February 11, 2005, and more precisely the decree of application of December 30, 2005 “on the educational path of students with a disability”, which assigns to “adapted devices” (article 1) the role of supporting and facilitating mainstream schooling, these structures not taking the form of special classes constituting a parallel segregated path. Unlike the previous paradigm of educational dualism, the paradigm of inclusion refers to a conception of educational unity in which subjects are considered in their “individual singularities in terms of a continuum of diversity rather than in terms of differences and breaks” (Benoit, 2012, p. 71).

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<sup>1</sup> Law of February 11, 2005 on equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of disabled persons.

These adapted and inclusive devices can, on the one hand, be compared to the new definition of “device” in the social sciences as a set of means characterized by their “indeterminacy” (Tremblay, 2015, p. 53) and coordinated for action, i.e. as a way to “get things done” on a technically traced path (Barrère, 2013, p. 99). The devices can also be considered from the viewpoint of “the analysis of relations of power” proposed by Foucault (2001 p. 302). In this framework, the concept of “strategic device”, as forged by the present author as a “process of functional over-determination” (*Ibid.*, p. 299), is defined as a structure of heterogeneous elements characterized by “the prevalence of a strategic objective”, the function of which is to meet at a given moment an emergency of a social type, for example “the absorption of a floating population mass that a society with a basically mercantile economy finds inconvenient: here was a strategic imperative, acting as the matrix of the device, which gradually became the device of control-subjugation of madness, mental illness, neurosis” (*Ibidem*). In this perspective, the strategic objective in the beginning of the creation of adapted and inclusive devices (on institutional and discursive bases) could be the transfer of an educational population mass from medical institutions to schools (Blanc, 2011, p.12), regardless of the change in paradigm and deep transformation of the professional culture of teachers required by inclusive education in the functioning of the educational system. The danger here would then be that the geographical transfer of these young persons from a segregated environment to a mainstream environment might nonetheless create invisible barriers under the same educational roof. These would be barriers of language, representations and practices that could create segregation within, and distinct modes of social affiliation.

In the French school system, the approach to the education of students with special needs through a personalized path clearly focuses much more on the guidance of the student in a given educational circuit than on accessibility, even though the characteristics of this circuit can constitute barriers for all, especially for the most vulnerable ones. At each stage of education the question arises whether guidance on the basis of a so-called realistic approach to the capacities of the young person (educational dualism) should be privileged, or on the contrary the strategy of creating equity through the transformation of learning methods and assessment within a curriculum to make it more accessible in a view of educational unity.

The barrier represented by forms of educational assessment, mostly summative rather than formative, used in particular in the French educational system, is now clearly identified and constitutes a source of tension with respect to re-founding of schools in an inclusive perspective. It cannot be denied that quantified grades and calculation of averages, that mix together data and overlook many strengths and weaknesses of students, stem from the social dimension of evaluation. This method of grading essentially seeks to manage the student’s educational “career” and to guide him in a system divided into branches rather than to produce optimal pedagogical conditions for his progress in learning. Here we find a zone where micro-powers come into play and “Institute regimes of truth (...)”, and can generate phenomena of exclusion, impeding “access to common patrimony, by definition open to all, with no categorial privileges and no prohibitions” (Gardou, 2014, p. 16-17). This situation is probably not unrelated to the fact that the French educational system is rated only 27th out of the 34 countries of the OECD in terms of the impact of social inequalities on students’ chances of academic success (MEN, 2013).

As for disabled students in great difficulty, the question of the evaluation of their academic level has often depended on an admission fee to be paid, on the right to access to educational integration, symptomatic of the historically exclusivist practices of the French educational system (Benoit, 2014b, p. 193). The criterion of academic level, as imprecise and relative as it is, tends to block the educational path of young persons in a situation of disability or educational difficulty: “he/she could not continue, he/she did not have a sufficient level” (Benoit, 2012, p. 72). As of 2011, Paul Blanc, in his Report to the President of the Republic (p. 41), pointed out that the implementation by educational authorities of the condition of academic level applied to disabled students in order to receive the assistance of the new ULIS<sup>1</sup>, devices created the previous year, constitutes “a restrictive interpretation of the ministerial circular of June 18, 2010 (...) restraining access of students who have not reached the academic level of the class”. Consequently, there was

an infringement on the principle of unconditional right to education.

Lastly, persons working in institutions and specialized services as well as special schools often express reservations about the objectives of inclusive education, which they perceive as “ideological” (Camberlein, 2011, p. 92). The implementation of adapted and inclusive devices or projects for students, like the Personalized Education Plan (projet personnalisé de scolarisation – PPS), overturn the references and subvert the history of a “self-referenced” specialized institution (Benoit, 2013, p. 58), structured by the internal rationality of the diptych of the educational and the therapeutical. These adapted and inclusive devices represent a de-institutionalized landscape in which medical-social structures are called upon to function as an “externally referenced” center of resources (*Ibid.*), and to serve people in their own living environments, and even to help make accessible the social and educational environment. The change in paradigm of the organization of action also leads to a transfer of the responsibility for management and supervision, now in the hands of external bodies (in France the MDPH<sup>2</sup>), all located outside of the medical-social institutional scope, and especially and more concretely, outside of the reassuring in-house symbolic space.

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<sup>1</sup> Unité localisée pour l'inclusion scolaire - Local unit for educational inclusion

<sup>2</sup> Centers in each département for disabled persons, created in application of the law 2005- 102 of February 11, 2005.

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