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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS IN LOCAL HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY TO THE PEDAGOGICAL-EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PUBLIC SOCIAL SPHERE

Abstract

Local history, as a form of experiential and cultural knowledge and experience, is directly connected to space and place, since it facilitates all students –particularly students with disabilities– to connect social narratives and personal experiences and memories with real environments, thereby providing them in this way with a content-rich framework for the meaning-making of teaching and learning. Geography, on the other hand, offers additional tools of organization, understanding, movement, and orientation, which in turn enhance the social participation and autonomy of students with disabilities in the public space and sphere, through the analysis of social interactions, routes, spaces, and mappings.The present scientifically critical and interpretive work and study aims to analyze and highlight the contribution of the design and implementation of actions in local history and geography to the educational and pedagogical process and practice of integration and inclusion of students with disabilities in the social becoming. Furthermore, it is observed and simultaneously established that the utilization of the two aforementioned fields can function as a lever for the strengthening and empowerment of the participation, expression, and visibility of students with disabilities in public life and, at the same time, constitute a factor and component of social change.

Keywords: local history, local geography, students with disabilities, integration and inclusion, public social sphere

Introduction

Students with disabilities can develop and use skills and abilities of observation, social engagement, and empathy, through targeted activities and actions, such as walks in historic neighborhoods, visits to monuments, the collection of oral testimonies, and the mapping of changes (Sopacua et al., 2020). Under this prism, it is noted that local history and geography –as teaching subjects with a strong experiential and interdisciplinary dimension and impact–provide an extremely fertile, appropriate, and effective fieldthrough real-life experiencesfor the cultivation of participatory skills, the development of social roles, and active citizenship (Kinsley, 2016; Hayhoe, 2017). In this way, it is recognized that through the combined utilization of the two aforementioned fields, a dynamic framework of inclusive learning is created, which allows all students –regardless of functional level, knowledge, and abilities– to express ideas and emotions, to activate sensory channels, to collaborate with peers, and to connect more strongly with the local community and public sphere (Vakulik et al., 2024).

Specifically, it must be emphasized that the integration and inclusion of students with disabilities constitute a central objective and practice of contemporary education systems and, in particular, emphasis is placed on differentiated instruction, on the creation of equal and fair social and learning conditions, and on the removal of public barriers, ensuring equal opportunities for their participation in the public social becoming and life (Wulong, 2023). Social cohesion, self-perception, the sense of “belonging,” and the development of personal identity as active members of the community, therefore, are found to be cultivated and structured through these processes. In any case, it is observed that local history focuses on the memories of the community, on the discovery of place, and on the narratives that connect people with space and its transformations, naturally, over time (Armiyati et al., 2025). With regard to local geography, it is underlined that it confers upon actions a systematic conceptualization and meaning-making of space, where all students (with and without disabilities) come into contact with cognitive and practical tools that enhance their participation and action in the real world, perception, navigation, and self-awareness, through and within natural formations up to the social structures and the spatial

organization of the respective community to which they belong and in which they live throughout their lives (Schreffler et al., 2019; Stokes et al., 2019).

The role of locally historical and geographical teaching and learning in the promotion and consolidation of inclusive culture

Local teaching and learning transform each respective student from a passive recipient of knowledge into an active creator of meaning, values, and attitudes, since they draw and extract material and content of transmission from the place, the memories, the environment, the narratives, and social life (Tural, 2023). With reference to students with disabilities, it is noted that this approach has double significance, because on the one hand, it offers opportunities for social interaction, communication, and practical autonomization and self-sufficiency, through environments that have specific meaning and substance for their everyday life, and on the other hand, it reduces the cognitive and social demands of abstract concepts, insofar as it is connected with real objects, images, stimuli, lived experiences, and experiences. More analytically for students with disabilities, it becomes apparent and is ascertained that the connection with real events, spaces, and objects facilitates the development of their cognitive skills such as classification, comparison, the recognition of causality and sequence, as well as the improvement of memory, attention, and the ability to execute all the stages and steps of various historical events and situations (Zafri-Hastuti et al., 2021). Contact with photographs, narratives from members of the community, oral history evidence, historical monuments, and maps enriches and develops sensory experience and allows the substantial understanding and interpretation of all local events (UNESCO, 2019a; Walter, 2021).

Geography as a cognitive teaching subject can become –particularly for students with intellectual disability and learning difficulties– accessible and comprehensible/understandable through digital maps, mapping, tactile materials, three-dimensional models, photographic series, and large-scale visual material. In addition, it is recognized that through the use of differentiated instruction, students can work on activities

and projects such as the design of school routes, the recognition of buildings, the recording of locations, and on orientation through images and simulations of real routes (Mol & Atchison, 2019; Absady & Matyzhanov, 2023). Knowledge of geography also contributes to the improvement of social participation and acceptance, since it provides the possibility for all students without exception to understand the role of green spaces and cultural structures, public spaces, and community services (Saripudin et al., 2021; Sarbaini-Hernawan et al., 2022). All the aforementioned, moreover, are directly connected with the development of social autonomy and, in essence, functionality, that is, the ability to participate, to move, to listen to ongoing events, and to interact in the public space with greater self-confidence, certainty, self-awareness, and safety (Ibragimovna, 2022; Rahimov, 2022).

Pedagogical-scientific approach and use of the principles of local history and geography in the inclusion of students with disabilities

The implementation of actions in local history and geography in inclusive education requires specific pedagogical principles that ensure the active participation of all students. Differentiation of instruction –which includes the adaptation of content, teaching practices, process, product, and the learning environment– constitutes a fundamental foundation of teaching for students with disabilities. This entails the use of tangible materials, the integration of multisensory approaches, the simplification of conceptual maps, the provision of structured instructions, and the use of frequent repetition and reinforcement (Greeno, 2016). The implementation of the actions and activities of local history and geography in the inclusive education of students of this particular group, therefore, requires the use and utilization of specific pedagogical principles and teaching methods that ensure the active participation of all students (Seok et al., 2018; Gutiérrez et al., 2020; Morgado et al., 2024). The project method offers a flexible framework and environment for the integration of local actions, providing the possibility and opportunity for students to work toward a common goal and to present the results to the school community. In addition, it is recognized that

cooperative learning and the group-collaborative approach enhance the participation of all students, facilitating and allowing mutual support and the development of bonds among the members of the group (Tenerife et al., 2022). Beyond the above, it is observed that the interconnection of the school with local bodies may create a broader network of pedagogical support and social integration of students with disabilities within the local and supra-local context of the public sphere (Sunarti et al., 2023). Experiential learning also constitutes the central method of approaching these students, since through walks, observations, explorations, mappings, discussions with members of the community, small-scale research, and group projects, students with disabilities develop skills such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, the undertaking of initiatives, and the management of emotions, which certainly transcend the limits of the subject matter. However, it is underlined that an important element is the use of photographs, videos, digital media, as well as the connection of activities with real events and local histories that mobilize their interest (Tobin & Behling, 2018; Triviño-Amigo et al., 2022).

The contribution of local history and geography actions to the cognitive, psycho-emotional, and social development and advancement of students with disabilities

It is established that the participation of students with disabilities in actions of local history and geography (Carabajal et al., 2017) may bring them multiple and diverse benefits and advantages, since the cognitive, psycho-emotional, social, and functional domains of their development and progress are supported, cultivated, and constructed (Sakti et al., 2024). More specifically, it appears that at the cognitive level, students with disabilities improve attention, observation, the ability of classification, the understanding of sequences, the comparison of information, and the processing of events. Admittedly, it is emphasized that the connection of concepts with real materials, landscapes, and situations facilitates understanding and strengthens working memory (Shiu, 2024). Experiential environments, now, at the psycho-emotional level and outcome, enhance joy, curiosity, interest, and their engagement in teaching and learning (Pickrell, 2020; Rimatuzzahriah et al., 2024).

In other words, it is underlined that the possibility of exploring real spaces encourages and facilitates autonomy, freedom of movement, and the development of positive identity and independence (Ramlan et al., 2023; Nurdauletova et al., 2024). In light of this reasoning, it is supported that geography and local history contribute significantly to the development of functional and practical skills of everyday life, such as orientation, the recognition of routes, environmental safety, and the utilization of public services, that is, abilities and capacities which are necessary for the social and personal autonomy and self-sufficiency of students with disabilities (Setiyonugroho et al., 2022). Actions at the social level, on the other hand, strengthen cooperation, participation in the group, communication, and the management of social interactions (Carabajal & Atchison, 2020; Saefudin et al., 2024). In this case, it becomes evident that students with disabilities acquire experiences of coexistence and interaction with different people, a fact that contributes to the reduction of social anxiety and to the strengthening of self-confidence. Local learning helps them to understand their role in broader social structures and to develop the sense of community (Dzombak, 2020; Muhamad et al., 2024).

Conclusions – Proposals

In any way and form, it becomes understandable that through the exploration of place –students with and without disabilities– acquire knowledge deeply connected with their everyday life, develop skills of navigation, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, while at the same time self-esteem, self-awareness, emotional stability, and the sense of “belonging” are strengthened. When local history and geography programs are designed on the basis of the principles of experiential learning, differentiated instruction, and cooperation between school – community, then they can function as catalysts of social innovation and community cohesion. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that the participation of the family, the involvement of local bodies, and the utilization of innovative digital tools enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the actions, transforming the school into a center of social change and promotion of inclusion of students with disabilities in lived reality. In this sense, it is recognized that actions of local history and geography constitute

strong pillars of inclusive education, since they strengthen social participation, cultivate the active citizenship of students with disabilities, and promote experiential learning.

Based on the above, there should exist networks of school units that will cooperate for the development of innovative inclusive practices of local history and geography; digital tools (multimedia applications, accessible maps, geotagging, etc.) should be developed by each respective local school which will facilitate the access of students with disabilities to knowledge; there should be the involvement of parents and the local community as bodies and partners for the promotion of issues of local history and geography in the educational process and practice; accessible learning routes should be created with municipalities and various cultural bodies; and the systematic adoption and utilization of oral history and mapping should be designed for the empowerment and strengthening of students with disabilities.

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