

PSIWORLD 2013

# Curriculum for children with disabilities in inclusive education. A literature review

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this meta-analysis study is to identify trends and emerging themes from the literature review regarding the curriculum for children with disabilities in inclusive education. The summary of findings: the curriculum for children with disabilities in inclusive contexts should ensure both equal rights and equal opportunities; individualised educational planning for these children is very wide spread; the teachers and parents opinions should be more reflected by different studies. Educational literature in Romania is generally in line with the international and European trends in the area of study but we need more research in connection with the emerging themes.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

*Keywords:* curriculum; children with disabilities; inclusive education

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## 1. Problem statement

Studies and educational experiences focussing on inclusive education, from Europe, USA and Romania have shown the importance of school curriculum in promoting and implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities. As inclusive education has become more prevalent, the curriculum perspective has gained greater attention among educators and researchers (Avissar, 2012) but there are limitations on the current research on inclusive education in general (Ozlem & Savagea, 2012).

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### 1.1. Theoretical framework. Basic definitions

**Curriculum:** “Curriculum is what is learned and what is taught (content); how it is delivered (teaching-learning methods); how it is assessed (exams, for example); and the resources used (i.e., books used to deliver and support teaching and learning)” (UNESCO 2004, p. 13).

**Disability:** „Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, 2006, article 1). „States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children” (UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, 2006, art. 7., 1).

**Inclusive education:** ‘Inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all, while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination’ (UNESCO, 2009, p.126). „States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure *an inclusive education system at all levels* and lifelong learning...” (UN Convention, 2006, art. 24, 1).

Some of the key questions raised from experience and previous research on this complex domain are:

What should be the content of teaching and learning for children with disabilities in inclusive contexts, also referring to the Individual Educational Plans?

Which are the basic teaching and learning strategies and methods in such circumstances?

What are the emerging themes for the research, deriving from this topic?

How are these themes approached comparatively, internationally (in the English language) and in the Romanian texts?

## 2. Objectives

- a) To identify some trends, principles and criteria for the main content, the IEPs situation and the teaching and learning strategies and methods for children with disabilities, in inclusive educational settings.
- b) To establish a core of emerging themes for research under the above circumstances.
- c) To make a short comparison on how these issues are tackled internationally and in Romania, in order to develop some recommendations for the own country.

## 3. Methodology

In this meta-analysis study, based on the definitions for the three main concepts (curriculum, disability and inclusive education) and using narrative literature review as a main method, several criteria for including various pieces of literature in the research area were identified, on the educational sciences field. The inclusion criteria for studies were: publications from the last 10 years; domain sources - educational sciences field (pedagogy, educational psychology, special education); a clear linkage between the three concepts: children with disabilities, school curriculum and educational inclusion; English and Romanian language.

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