



Inclusive Education and Human Rights

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Education is essential to equality and freedom of choice. It is the most important tool for building a tolerant world where citizens, whatever their abilities, respect one another; a world that holds a common respect for the human rights of people with disabilities and their ability to contribute.

Everywhere, in every situation or activity where the human rights of others are already respected, there is a need for the human rights of people with disabilities to be respected as well. Playing or working with a person with a disability makes one consider the *abilities* of the person, and the disability-related supports which that person might need to access the place he/she wants to live, work, or play. It causes one to think about how to make the individual's participation possible, and together with the individual to elaborate on solutions that are respectful of his/her dignity. It helps one to learn about other ways of doing things.

For a person to live daily with mobility and/or communication restrictions is a challenge because what is only a minor problem for a person without a disability can be a major, even traumatic issue for a person who has a disability. Living, working, or playing with a person with a disability obliges one to be more attentive to the consequences of one's gestures, pronunciation, the quality of one's listening, and the words one uses when speaking about or with persons with disabilities. Inclusive education, which must also be interactive education, engages pupils to share experiences and, in particular, acquire an understanding about differences among people and learn a unique lesson on the consequences of human rights violations.

Inclusive and interactive education is a wonderful way to teach human rights, and an efficient pedagogic tool to make pupils aware of their rights. It also increases awareness, for example, of their obligation to make education accessible for their comrades.

From the perspective of human rights, the interactive inclusion of people with disabilities in education should be seen not only as an obligation but also as an opportunity to educate all children on human rights, and on the importance of having respect for everyone.

In addition, those who are still seen solely as "*unable*" to be educated, or regarded only on the basis of their "*needs*" relevant to their "*severe or multiple disabilities*", can be better seen through inclusive, interactive education as contributors and partners.

In that sense, people with disabilities can be considered as some of the best human rights educators, and inclusive education should be understood as "a real chance for school".

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Jean-Luc Simon

Chair of Disabled Peoples' International Europe