



PROPOSAL OF PROJECT FOR JOINTLY SUPERVISED DOCTORAL THESIS UNITA

Cultural Heritage x; Circular Economy □; Renewable Energy□;

Interdisciplinary □

Title of the project:

Policy for inclusive education in Romania and the impact of the Index for inclusion as a global tool

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Doctoral School of Psychology; Doctoral Study Program in Educational Sciences

Research Centre

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Research Centre

Description of the PhD project

Prof.dr.habil. Simona Sava, from the Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timisoara, with expertise in educational policy and educational management, together with Prof.dr. Monica Mincu, from the University of Torino, and UCL Institute of Education, UK, specialized in comparative education, propose a joint PhD supervision on policy analysis of inclusive education in Romania through the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2016).

Inclusive education is a topic that has been intensively researched and debated internationally especially in the last 30 years, with the Salamanca Declaration (1994) on the education of people with disabilities (Baba et al., 2009, Ainscow et al., 2019, Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020). Research has shown that education conducted in inclusive environments has academic and social benefits and is seen as progress towards a more inclusive and equitable society (Antoninis et al., 2020; Kefallinou, 2020; Mincu, Allasia, 2012)

Despite various efforts to conceptualize and implement inclusive education, by including people with disabilities in mainstream education, we cannot yet speak of the qualitative achievement of inclusive education, at least in the Romanian space (Vrășmaș & Vrășmaș, 2021). The project focuses, therefore, on understanding the functionality of inclusive education in the Romanian education system.

To analyze the extent to which inclusive education is effectively achieved, the Inclusion Index (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) was developed. The Inclusion Index is an analytical tool aimed at improving inclusive education in schools and education systems by facilitating a framework for structured reflection on the analysis and development of inclusive practices, cultures, and policies. It is used in several countries such as England (Higham & Booth, 2016), Spain (Velez-Calvo et al., 2018), Australia (Carrington & Duke, 2014), Japan (Heung, 2006.), Norway (Nes, 2009). Over the years, as a dynamic tool it has undergone various editions, and is now in its 4th edition (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). It can be considered as a travelling policy meant for school improvement. As a global policy tool, using the analytical lenses "of 'epistemo-logic' of comparative social enquiry the 'socio-logic' of reform-orientated international studies on education, and the 'globo-logic' of investigating inherently trans-national and/or world-spanning educational phenomena and organisations" (Schriewer, 2014, p. 84), the PhD thesis should highlight the local effects of global policies, with respect to inclusive education in Romania.

The Inclusion Index has been translated into Romanian, in two different editions, it is used as an educational policy tool (Ministry of Education, 2020), but it is used sporadically and not sufficiently known, no data on its application and results have been published. In the Romanian education system, the Education Law of 2011 provides for the equal right to education for all, in line with the idea of inclusive policies at international level. However, although the legislative framework in the Romanian education system supports the equal right to education, inclusive education is not realized qualitatively (Marin, 2016; Vrășmaș & Vrășmaș, 2021).

That is why we propose that in the PhD thesis, starting from the analytical framework of the Inclusion Index, to analyze to what extent inclusive education is realized qualitatively in the Romanian educational system, identifying solutions to improve its functionality.

The contribution of this research is to conduct a structured analysis of the policy framework, from formulation to implementation and evaluation, at the macro systemic and school level, using the Inclusion Index analytical framework (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). Through content analysis of education policy documents on inclusion, expert interviews with policy makers, specialists, researchers in the field of inclusive education, it seeks to identify gaps and solutions for better articulation and operationalization of inclusive education. The PhD thesis favors a comparative analysis that highlights the full complexity of the problem in the socio-historical and cultural context, causal aspects, legitimacy,

discursive institutionalism (Schriewer, 2021), contributing to international debates on inclusive education by highlighting the specificities of the Romanian space. Applying rather a humanistic and democratic paradigm to the analysis of inclusive education policies and practices, to ensure access to quality (inclusive) education for all (Elfert, 2023), the thesis aims to identify dysfunctional aspects and possible scientifically legitimate solutions for a better articulation of inclusive education policies and practices.

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