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## The Use of Narratives in Inclusive Education. Empirical Findings on Disability Status and Situation

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### Abstract

*This review article identifies how learners are named with respect to inclusive education according to the terms 'condition' or 'situation'. Methodologically, a documentary review of treaties, conventions, movements, regulations and literature specialists was carried out. An approach based on the role played by narrative in the situation of people with disabilities was carried out. The following results of what education should promote can be highlighted: i) to emphasise language because inclusion is naturalised in everyday speech; ii) to analyse educational needs with respect to a condition or situation and iii) to understand that reflections on these terms help to make inclusivity visible. Overall, the use of narrative to accommodate inclusive language makes it easier for society to recognise inclusivity.*

**Keywords:** *narratives; inclusive education; diversity; status and situation.*

### 1. Introduction

The use of narrative for learner growth purposes is essential for any group, as has been noted in a previous study (Sevilla-Vallejo, 2022). In this paper, this will be looked at specifically for inclusive education as a service that is equitably for all. It conducts a documentary review, which reveals the orientation of the language and criteria adopted in inclusive education with regard to the terms 'condition' or 'situation'.

The research arose from the construction of a didactic material for teachers, parents and students, developed with the aim of working with art and play in times of pandemic in Ecuador. In this creation and editing meeting, the authors generated an analysis of how to approach and communicate educational needs, with respect to the meaning and connotation of the terms "condition" and "situation" within the framework of the rights approach.

Human rights, their declarations and conventions, influenced laws that helped to understand the dimension of the terminology used to protect adults, youth and children, some belonging to "minorities", from being discriminated against because of their socio-economic background, language, sexual orientation, abilities or any other nature.

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The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), takes approaches inspired by universal principles, such as the principle of the best interests of the child. In this context, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2001) arises, whose instrument encourages the questioning of how societies express themselves when they talk about persons with disabilities and hence reveals a highly discriminatory language that reaffirms the disability or other scenarios that minorities present, their limitations and their impossibilities.

The United Nations, countries, people and institutions directly linked to the problem are making countless efforts to change the perspective, the vision, the concepts, the language, in short, the way in which the problem is viewed and how to provide solutions in social environments at the confluence with rights.

For this reason, people with disabilities went from calling them "handicapped, dumb, blind" to calling them persons or children and adolescents with disabilities, because it was thought that this was a condition with which they were born or acquired in life, this word fits exactly the definition expressed in the dictionary and it was thought that this term defined the problem in coherence with the respect for human rights. In addition, another way of naming certain weaknesses reflected in students' learning, such as: "lazy, irresponsible, lazy, stupid". However, societies are moving forward and are realising that, although non-discriminatory terms are available, science evolves and new findings lead to the use of new terms.

It is evident that the term condition, although it is somewhat in line with the postulate in human rights, does not fully respond to new scientific developments with regard to understanding the requirements of educational needs. Today, the role of the mind in relation to educational needs or health problems, which was previously considered to be unsolvable, is now thought to be no longer an immobile reality; there are studies that confirm the changes that can take place. However, taking as a characteristic that human beings are diverse, it is described as attention to diversity, (López, 2018) According to the different educational needs they present, these can be analysed within the classroom (Schnitzler et al., 2021) or hybridisation (Stang et al., 2021). In this sense, new meanings and connotations take place in the language that in turn allows the development of different narratives that support the work of inclusive education, according to the terms that this article considers.

The article follows the fundamentals of the state of the art, in order to have reliable and sustained information to promote greater use, to progressively change the individual and social view on the issue in question.

## **2. Delimitation of the Problem**

The aim of this article is to focus on the knowledge of a phenomenon, in order to generate new understandings to adopt or develop a theoretical perspective to achieve other ways of expressing the words "condition" and "situation", used when referring to learners when inclusive education is mentioned.

The hypothesis that motivates research, discussion and writing seeks to answer the question: Does language allow us to influence the change of paradigm in the context of the educational sphere and strengthen inclusive education?

## **3. Method**

The methodology used for this study, is based on qualitative research, "that which produces descriptive data: people's own words, spoken or written, and observable behaviour" (Taylor

and Bogdan, 1996, p. 20), connected with categorical analysis strategies. It is based on an inductive analysis with the approach to data processing from grounded theories (Hernández, et al., 2014). Based on abstract data from various sources analysed, the narratives transcend and show explanations around the terms "condition" and "situation", from their connotation within inclusive education, in order to make conceptual analyses, as well as to understand the ways of using these words.

The content analysis of qualitative data is based on the identification of document that treaties, conventions and movements that support education for all, the different education laws in the countries of the Latin American region, as well as the descriptions made by language specialists. The conceptual ideas regarding the way of referring to children and adolescents with educational needs have been taken from these contents.

#### **4. Conceptual Development**

"My child doesn't learn the same as others". "How street children study".

"What the life of a child with a disability would be like in the future". "How the life of a severely disabled person is sustained".

"In my class there is a child who does not learn".

"In the school there is a child who can't see and is in a wheelchair, poor thing". "How I will achieve the learning of all students in my classroom".

"I am a teacher of a class where there are different children: tall and short, fat and skinny, dark and white, restless and quiet, shy and outgoing, poor and less poor, talkative and quiet, with organised and disorganised households, some with disabilities and some with different abilities. How will I deal with learning?"

"In my class there is a girl who is always beaten up".

These are expressions of children and teachers in general basic education and high school, contained in a sum of ways of understanding the surrounding world and a verbal language that speaks of a certain reality and needs to be modified in multiple dimensions. This article aims to focus on one of them: language. Language is the most complete expression, it expresses everything: life, sociological, anthropological, technological, natural, scientific, etc. phenomena. Scientific knowledge is born of questions, questioning existing reality, it is configured on the basis of searches and verifications that are accumulated and disseminated through a specific language. Scientific language follows an intellectual process of transformation when accessible to people's understanding, over time it becomes compatible with the everyday life of societies that communicate through language, and it is this collective language that modifies and improves life.

Words in an expressive order that is understood, make up the language that offers the ability of human beings to express thoughts, feelings, understandings of reality, relationships, therefore words have power, have denotations and connotations, which are the subject of this study and are related to inclusive education.

#### **What Treaties, Conventions and Movements in the World Express**

Inclusive education is a concept of care for all learners, ensuring their attendance, participation and academic success (UNESCO, 2001), regardless of their abilities, gender, language, ethnicity, socio-economic status or any other condition. (Tárraga-Mínguez et al., 2021). It implies

the approach and application of the right to education, described internationally and locally for all sectors that demand it (Meléndez, 2012). The descriptions are complemented by treaties, conventions and movements at the global level and in each country according to local regulations, under principles such as: equity, equal opportunities, access without distinctions or privileges and attention to educational needs as central elements of development; therefore, it is provided free of charge and actions are defined to guarantee the right of all citizens, without distinction or privilege at the first levels of education (initial, pre-school or kindergarten and primary or basic and even secondary or baccalaureate).

Therefore, from this theoretical and political perspective, the analysis of the narratives on the terms "condition" or "situation" presented by the students is carried out as part of the work on inclusive education. The movements have made it possible to generate spaces for analysing attention according to the needs presented by different groups. UNESCO's Education for All movements such as: The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien (1990), cites the term "condition", referring to indispensable conditions, of taking advantage, of learning, necessary, for all, of society, labour, teaching, concrete, work, national and of each country; while the term "situation" refers to it in a situation of isolation, social, of the teaching staff, real of basic education, local, of disadvantage.

The Dakar World Education Forum on Education for All (2000) only cites the term "situation", referring to the situation of basic education worldwide.

Movements, according to the particularities of different groupings, such as: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981), refers only to the term "status", they use it when referring to conditions with men, of equality between men and women, of guidance, of equality, of service, of work and of life. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) refers to the term: exceptionally difficult conditions of the child's life, ensuring the child's dignity, equal opportunities, work, peace and security, while it mentions the legal status of the child, of parents, of the child, of children without economic, social or gender distinction.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) refers to the term "status", which is used to refer to conditions of slavery, migration status, conditions of work and employment, living conditions, equal treatment with nationals, equitable conditions applicable to their admission and stay and remunerated activities, legal conditions and rights of undocumented migrants, abusive conditions and the promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment, seasonal conditions, conditions of non-convicted persons, conditions of employment, ensuring effective equality of treatment, conditions of stay, conditions of recognition, of professional qualifications acquired outside the territory of the State; conditions of employment, agreed by the state and economic conditions suitable for their resettlement.

While the term "status" refers to the migrant status, regular, irregular, economic status of such persons in accordance with national legislation and applicable bilateral or multilateral agreements, work status, alien status, global status of protection of human rights of migrants, migrant women, vulnerability, economic, parole, family and legal status.

The Salamanca Statement (1994), developed through the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (1994), refers to the term "condition", referring to the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other disabling physical, intellectual, emotional, linguistic or other conditions and local circumstances in which different groups of adults with

disabilities and health conditions develop their profession. The term "situation" refers to special educational needs, which may occur indifferent countries and regions as well as outside school.

The Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2004), refers to the term "conditions of equality and society for persons with disabilities". Regarding the situation, it refers to persons with disabilities in the Americas.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), refers to the term "status", with respect to conditions with others, of social life, particularly in developing countries, of poverty and recognition of life, with other children, of poverty, of peace and security, of equality of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; it also refers to bank loans, of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, in education and as members of the community, of selection, recruitment and employment, of safe and healthy work, of persons with disabilities, of access to retirement and living programmes and benefits in all countries. While the word "situation" refers to persons with disabilities, risk and humanitarian emergencies, armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters and poverty and state assistance.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2002), refers only to the term "status", referring to conditions for a renewed dialogue between cultures and civilisations and conducive to the production and dissemination of diversified cultural goods and services.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2006) refers to the term "status" as referring to the legal status of indigenous peoples to express their views on the inherent inherent in maintaining the way of life of indigenous peoples, enabling them to achieve sustainable economic and social development, which is essential to realise in practice the agreed legal and social rights of indigenous peoples and ideals to raise awareness. While the term "situation", refers to the human rights, of such peoples, in which governments do not accept the rights, of one person or group and that of others, unequal does not amount to discrimination, whether objectively the same, of indigenous women and children, of communities, of human rights, conflicting, highly complex and conflicts, de facto or de jure, specific to indigenous peoples, human rights, human rights violation, national, human rights in general or on more specific issues, violation, privileged to assist States, human rights, national, particular, conflict, slavery, economic, particular brought to their attention, emergency, following a violent clash between police and a group of indigenous protesters.

What has been pointed out by UNESCO, as well as in regional events such as movements and declarations that seek to respond to education for all, shows that the term "condition" is mostly mentioned, without a differentiation of the terms with regard to the way they are referred to, and there is even analogy between them. For example: the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families refers to the terms migrant or migrant status or situation, or work status; or the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities mentions the term disability status or situation. Table 1 systematises the above, according to the way in which the two terms are used.

**Table 1** Systematisation of Narratives Regarding Condition/s and Situation.

Movement	<b>Number of term citations</b>	
	Condition	Situation
World Conference on Education for All Jomtien (1990)	20	7
Dakar World Education for All Forum (2000)	-	3
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1981)	15	-
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	21	7
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)	76	60
Salamanca Statement (1994) developed through the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (1994).	7	5
Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2004).	1	2
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	54	5
Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in (2002)	2	-
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2006)	25	88
	221	177

**Note:** This Table Shows the Number of Times the Terms "Condition" or "Situation" have been Used with Respect to how People are Referred to. Source: Compiled by Authors.

### What the Regulations Refer to

The Education Laws of the countries in the Latin American region, which support work on inclusive education, related to narratives, with respect to the way of referring to the "condition" or "situation" of students, is described with greater emphasis in Mexico when describing condition in Article 7, regarding the exercise of the right to education, in the case of a health condition; Article 8, on equity and educational excellence, mentions food and migratory conditions; and Article 61 on inclusive education, ratifies the health condition. Regarding situation, Article 8, on equity and educational excellence, mentions migratory situation; Article 16 on education criteria mentions situation of vulnerability; Article 103 on educational facilities refers to emergency situation; and Article 128 on the participation of parents or guardians refers to academic situation (Ley General de Educación, 2019). Argentina, when describing the conditions, in Article 11, refers to equality, respecting the differences between people without admitting gender discrimination or any other type of discrimination, guaranteeing access to all and the conditions for permanence; and Article 80, describes necessary conditions for inclusion. Regarding the situation, Article 83 mentions that teachers with more experience and qualifications are employed in schools that are in a more unfavourable situation (Law 26.206, 2006). Peru refers to the term "condition" in Article 19 on the education of indigenous peoples, recognising and guaranteeing the right of indigenous peoples to an education on equal terms with the rest of the national community. The word "situation" is mentioned in Article 17, when it states that the State takes measures to favour social segments that are in a situation of

abandonment or risk in order to provide them with preferential attention; and in Article 18, it defines the elaboration and execution of educational projects that include objectives, strategies, actions and resources aimed at reversing situations of inequality and/or inequity due to origin, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, opinion, economic condition, age or any other kind (Law 28044, 2003).

The countries that only refer to the term "condition" are Chile, which mentions the word condition in Article 4, indicating that basic education and secondary education are compulsory, and that the state must finance a free system aimed at ensuring access for the entire population, as well as generating the conditions for permanence in accordance with the law (*Ley General de Educación*, 2017). Paraguay mentions the term "condición" in Articles 1, 3 and 4, defining that every inhabitant of the Republic has the right to a comprehensive and permanent education, the State shall guarantee the right to learn, equal opportunities and the responsibility to ensure access to education for the entire population of the country and to create the conditions for real equality of opportunities; Article 10, on principles, points out the equality of conditions for access and permanence in educational centres; Article 23 states that educational authorities, through compensation programmes, shall give preferential attention to groups and regions that face economic, demographic and social disadvantages; furthermore, the State shall guarantee the integration of students with special educational conditions (*Law 1264*, 1998). Ecuador refers to the conditions in Article 228 on special educational needs, describing the requirements of support or temporary or permanent adaptations that allow access to a quality service according to the conditions of the student; and Article 234 lists conditions of vulnerability of students (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, 2011).

### **What Language Specialists Say**

The analysis focuses on language because of its transcendence, "each word or expression that is chosen indicates the conceptualisation of the speaker" (Hualde, et al., 2010). Indeed, language has denotations and connotations, it has a way of contextualising the environment, it contains concepts that arise from the meaning of words, phrases and sentences, it is a representation of the conceptualisation of the notion that they express. In other words, when we talk about meaning, we refer to conceptualisation that expresses the psychology of the subject (Sevilla-Vallejo, 2018).

The impoverishment of language also questions communication: "even about communication that has lost its substantive meaning and serves more to express social relations" (Chomsky, 2017, p. 40).

It is common to hear "children with disabilities need to be included in regular education" and so to refer to anything about children with disabilities, one speaks of the condition of disability. The word: -disability status- is accepted within the human rights framework as correct. However, it begs the question of how fair the word condition is in terms of inclusive education. This concern leads to a search, starting with the most elementary: dictionaries, and in none of them is a definition found that refers directly and explicitly to the condition of disability as an example, although some possible answers can be found in the general concepts.

María Moliner's dictionary has a more complete definition of the term "condición" and defines it as: "A way of being naturally a thing or a kind of thing, e.g.: solidarity is characteristic of the human condition. In the catalogue of this word there are coincidences such as: Antecedent, impediment" (Moliner, 2007, p. 747). It could be inferred that the word condition expresses a

natural way of being of people with disabilities. From the meanings reviewed in the catalogue, it could be interpreted that the word "condición" is an antecedent that designates the person, which expresses a kind of impediment; in any case it speaks of a different condition. So far the denotation of the word, when we move on to the connotation of the term condition, we are talking about meanings created by the social or cultural environment, by the way of perceiving things and that is where we enter the field of interpretations of the National Administration of Public Education of Uruguay "the connotation is an additional meaning or a secondary meaning that a word can have, it is everything that it is capable of evoking or suggesting, and that goes beyond the merely denotative. The connotative meaning is the emotional and valorative semantic component or features associated with a term" (Ceballos-Marón and Sevilla-Vallejo, 2020).

Leech, (1974) as cited in Garrido, (1979), warns that connotations have properties, they are relatively unstable because they vary considerably according to the individual, the time, the society in question; they are not specific to language, they exist in other communicative systems, they are indeterminate and without fixed limit, since "any characteristic of the referent, indicated subjectively or objectively, can contribute to the connotative meaning of the expression that denotes it ... They are analysable in continuous, not discrete terms. They are explicable by an 'associationist theory' of mental connections based on the contiguity of experience" (p. 21). In the light of this study, it refers to the connotation of the word "condición" in the cultural sphere of Ecuador and perhaps part of Latin America.

Situation is one of the words that encompasses a large number of meanings in almost all aspects of human daily life. The dictionary of the Real Academia de la Lengua defines it as "the action and effect of situating or situating oneself. Disposition of a thing with respect to the place it occupies. State or constitution of things and people. Set of factors or circumstances that affects someone or something at a given time" (2020).

Moliner's dictionary, (2007), attributes among others these meanings "accident of things by which they occupy a certain place... to be in, to pass through, to change (worsen or improve)... state of things, stage, moment, to be, to be found" (p. 2735). None of the meanings express as an example anything about the word situation in relation to an educational need or disability, nothing explicitly, although in the catalogue of words in their dictionary, which explains the term situation, there are some that may fit in some way. These words suggest that when talking about an educational need or a disability, the situation is a circumstance that can happen or that can be modified.

When you look at synonymous words you find various circumstances, conjuncture, state, stage, phase, trance and all of them express an idea of limitation in time, with which the situation can change, it is a word, which expresses disability better because in reality it is a situation that by changing the circumstances that surround it overcomes the hardness of the permanent, of that which does not change, of that which immobilises.

It is worth analysing the connotation of the word situation, as authors we do believe that there is a difference between saying, for example, street children or children in a street situation, as well as saying children with disabilities and children with disabilities, but what is the difference? Well, clearly the connotation of the word situation is the difference, i.e. the word situation has a greater connotation of temporality, of change; naming the street as well as disability with the preposition de. According to the dictionary of the Real Academia de la Lengua "denotes possession or belonging", that is to say, it has a consubstantial nature to being, on the other



hand the word situation expresses a fact, which under certain conditions can change and that is what is expected socially, that situations change so that people are included in a society that should tend to be fairer and more equitable.

Language is an expression that clearly evidences social inclusion or exclusion, it is a communicative and therefore collective fact used both in the private and public spheres. It is clear that social inclusion or exclusion are multifactorial issues and language is very strong because it is evident, but undoubtedly actions are required that target the multiple factors that determine it in order to achieve educational inclusion; for today it only occupies language as a fundamental factor in the fulfillment of children's rights, within the framework of education.

It is said that persons with disabilities are persons in a condition of disability, so one wonders what condition of disability means and one thinks that condition is a way of naming it in a more respectful way, however, it has become a kind of "hard" letterhead, which shows an image of someone who has an irreversible position that is like this and no other way, has a condition that determines it and makes it different, limited. Then, one thinks about what would be the most inclusive word and the word "situation" appears. A situation can be modified is a more "flexible" word and leads us to think about broad possibilities of inclusion.

In the search for information, there is only one document that includes the word situation and an appropriate concept of it, with a more flexible approach and in full alignment with the concept of human rights; it is a document of the government of Chile, (2015) by the section of participation, gender and inclusion. It is entitled "Recommendations for the use of inclusive language for persons with disabilities" and is self-explanatory:

Since the United Nations (UN) International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the appropriate term to refer to this population group has been Persons with Disabilities (PWD) or Persons in a Situation of Disability... Persons in a situation of disability are persons who, in relation to their physical and mental health conditions... interacting with various contextual, attitudinal and environmental barriers, present restrictions in their full and active participation in society.

... Disability is therefore no longer defined as a health or rehabilitation issue, but as a human rights issue. This implies a perspective of promoting a positive approach to the issue, and not a welfare approach (p. 2).

In addition, we searched UN documents and did not find what was stated in the document quoted above, i.e. that the UN had provided for it, surely it was a topic raised at some meeting or workshop for the presentation and dissemination of the Convention; in any case, it was a surprise to find a document directly in line with what concerns and motivates the research that underpins this article. This official document fully supports the approach of using the term situation of disability, instead of condition of disability, and does so with detailed arguments to be applied to the concrete reality of Chile.

## **Conclusions**

Considering the above, it is evident the relevance and importance of inclusive education analysed from the narratives on 'condition' and 'situation' that children and adolescents may present, which is shown as final reflections:

Human rights, including the exercise of the right to education, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are cited in the Constitutions and in all the legal instruments adopted in each of the countries of the Latin American region. Education, seen as a right, is an essential element for defining policies, plans, programmes and projects in terms of an educational service, and constitutes a fundamental frame of reference for inclusive education that seeks to be of quality and at the service of all. However, the terminology referring to the "condition" or "situation" presented by students shows analogical ways of referring to it, even generating abstractions.

The term "situation" is the context or set of circumstances surrounding something or someone at a specific point in time. Whereas the term "condition" refers to a state or circumstance in which something or someone is at a given time. It can imply a physical state, an emotional state, or a constraint. So "situation" refers to the context or circumstances surrounding that something, while "condition" focuses more on the state or restrictions of something. Both words are important in language to describe and understand different aspects of reality.

The term 'situation' is much more appropriate than the word 'condition' when talking about inclusive education. It would seem to be a very simple fact of meaning, but as discussed it has wider implications that have to do with culture, with views about human rights, and with the concept of inclusive education itself.

The day when the collective imagination, when expressing the words disability or any other educational need, is expressing the fact that work is being done to achieve the full capacity of students, to eliminate the barriers produced by social discrimination, to overcome the imaginary of impossibility, of limitation and to assume, in solidarity and reciprocity, personal differences in pursuit of the construction of a collective way of living and assuming not only the problems but above all the solutions; we will be at the perfect moment to foresee important changes in society.

Therefore, the aim has been to analyse this issue of language in order to strengthen and empower students, families and teachers in inclusive education. When people involved in inclusive education talk about the situation of disability or any other difference, with the clarity of knowing what the term situation implies and the commitment to change and overcome it requires from everyone, they will be contributing to the best project of humanity built by human beings: human rights.

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