

## **Inclusion or Integration in the classroom ? Students with special needs on their educational accommodations**

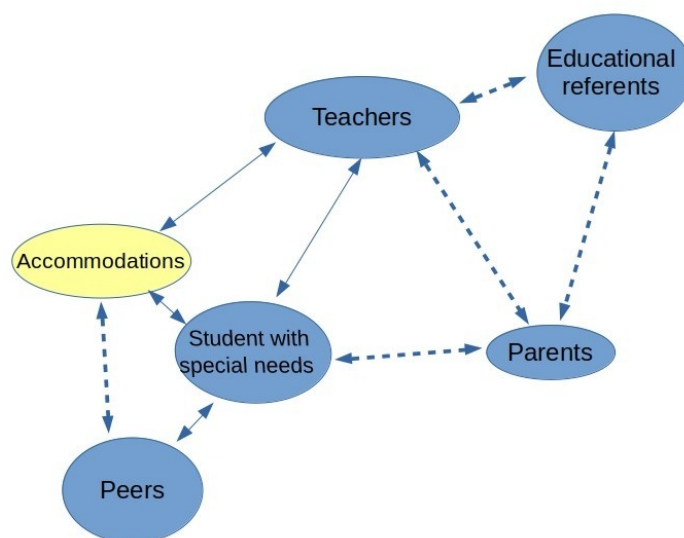
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The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its General comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education distinguishes between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion of the students with disabilities.

While exclusion and segregation are still available in France, the French educational system also provides students with special needs with accommodations in the mainstream schools. However, their integrative (the students with special needs has to fit in) or inclusive (the school has to cater for the needs of all its students) feature is open to debate.

In order to have a first-person perspective on the educational accommodations, 52 students with special needs, aged 11 and 15 were interviewed in 2016 (by Cristina Popescu, Noémie Rapegno and Olivier Thiery). It was part of a broader research on inclusive school in France (Ville, 2019). I was in charge of analysing these interviews, using a thematic approach with the Quirkos software.

These interviews show that the provided accommodations are enmeshed within complex relationships between the student, the peers and the teacher.



These interactions can dramatically alter the meaning and the efficiency of the accommodations. The most prominent accommodation, the providing of an aide (or “School Life Assistant”) proves to be diversely accepted in this system. Some students prefer to opt out of this kind of accommodation, seeing it as a barrier for their inclusion in their group of peers.

Within this setting, and from the point of view of the students with special needs, the distinction between integration and inclusion seems blurred. Within one day, and sometimes within the time-span of a lesson, a student with special needs may have to struggle to meet the constraints of maladjusted environment and attitudes, or see their needs attended to. Faced with these challenges, and the difficulty of the organisation of the care some students need, students as parents may feel encouraged to opt for the special education schools.

### Reference

Ville Isabelle (coord), 2019, *Les défis de l'école inclusive en France. Des attentes aux modalités concrètes*, Research report, 170 p.