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The evolution of the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection (2017–2025). A metatheoretical model

Ewolucja rozumienia edukacji włączającej i jej podmiotów w polskiej refleksji pedagogicznej (2017–2025). Model metateoretyczny

Abstract

The aim of this article is to reconstruct the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection between 2017 and 2025. The analysis encompassed scholarly articles, identifying dominant ways of conceptualizing inclusion and their transformation over time. The findings indicate a shift from a compensatory – legal approach, focused on pupils with disabilities, toward a systemic – community and civic model in which inclusion in education is understood as designing learning environments for all and building a culture of responsibility and co-participation. Simultaneously, the subject of inclusive education evolves from a recipient of support into a relational, networked, and ecosystemic participant in the school community. The evolutionary model was validated by reference to the typology proposed by Kerstin Göransson and Claes Nilholm.

Keywords: inclusive education, subjectivity, metatheoretical model

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest rekonstrukcja rozumienia edukacji włączającej oraz jej podmiotów w polskiej refleksji pedagogicznej w latach 2017–2025. Analizie poddano artykuły naukowe, identyfikując dominujące sposoby konceptualizacji inkluzji i ich przemiany w czasie. Wyniki wskazują na przejście od ujęcia kompensacyjno-prawnego, skoncentrowanego na uczniu z niepełnosprawnością, ku modelowi systemowo-wspólnotowemu i obywatelskiemu, w którym inkluzja w edukacji oznacza projektowanie środowiska uczenia się dla wszystkich oraz budowanie kultury odpowiedzialności i współuczestnictwa. Równolegle podmiot edukacji włączającej ewoluuje od adresata wsparcia do relacyjnego, sieciowego i ekosystemowego uczestnika wspólnoty szkolnej. Model ewolucyjny został zwalidowany przez odniesienie do typologii Kerstin Göransson i Claes Nilholm.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja włączająca, podmiotowość, model metateoretyczny

Introduction

Inclusive education (educational inclusion) constitutes one of the key issues of contemporary pedagogy, no longer limited solely to special education. Grzegorz Szumski, analysing the multiplicity of approaches to inclusive education, distinguishes two groups of definitions: descriptive and prescriptive. In these approaches, inclusion is defined either through descriptions of inclusive practices implemented by schools and educational institutions or presented as an idea – a reform project of the education system aimed at building a high-quality school for all pupils.[1] The significance of educational inclusion[2] extends beyond organizational solutions within the education system and concerns fundamental anthropological, axiological, and social issues. In recent years, Polish academic discourse has revealed clear shifts in the understanding of inclusion and its subject. The present analysis is metatheoretical in character – it does not merely summarize positions and practical implementations but reconstructs their logic and the direction of the evolution of the concept of inclusive education.

The research material consists of theoretical and empirical publications from 2017–2025 on inclusive education. The adopted time frame – from 2017 to 2025 – was determined by significant changes in the Polish education system that directly influenced the shaping of conditions and ways of understanding and implementing inclusive education. The year 2017 marked an important moment in Polish educational law, as three key regulations governing support for students with special educational needs (SEN) were introduced.

First, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017, "on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public preschools, schools, and institutions" specified in detail the forms and conditions of assistance as well as the rules of cooperation of between pupil support teams with the pupil's environment, the school, and psychological-pedagogical counselling centres.[3]

Second, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017, "on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing, and care for children and youth with disabilities and those at risk of social maladjustment" defined, among other things, the conditions for implementing special education in institutions of various types and specified the responsibilities of entities providing support.[4]

The third significant act was the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 September 2017, "on issuing rulings and opinions by adjudicating teams operating in public psychological-pedagogical counselling centres", which

[1] G. Szumski, *Koncepcja edukacji włączającej* [in:] *Edukacja włączająca w przedszkolu i szkole*, eds. I. Chrzanowska, G. Szumski, Warszawa 2019, p. 14.

[2] In the article, I will use the terms "educational inclusion" and "inclusive education" interchangeably. In Polish academic literature, these terms are considered synonyms.

[3] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1591.

[4] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1578.

standardized the system of issuing decisions regarding the need for special education, opinions on the need for assistance, and other diagnostic-support documents.[5]

Selecting 2017 as the starting point of the analysis makes it possible to comprehensively capture the discourse of inclusive education from the moment when the existing system of psychological and pedagogical support and adjudication procedures was structured and embedded within a legislative framework that became a reference point for school practice and pedagogical research.

The year 2025 was adopted as the closing boundary due to ongoing and planned systemic reform projects of major importance for inclusive education. In 2025, the Ministry of Education submitted for public consultation a draft regulation concerning rulings and opinions issued by adjudicating teams operating in psychological-pedagogical counselling centres.[6] Moreover, in 2025 work began on implementing legal forms related to the functional assessment of pupils, which is to be introduced in the coming years as a mandatory element of the education system, enabling a more holistic diagnosis of barriers and planning of educational support (proposed regulations of the Ministry of Education/educational projects of 2025/2026).

Adopting this time frame makes it possible not only to reconstruct transformations in the discourse of inclusive education in response to specific legal regulations but also to account for breakthrough moments in shaping the institutional and practical conditions of inclusion. Establishing 2017 as the initial reference point and 2025 as the beginning of a subsequent phase of systemic change ensures coherence of the analysis in terms of the impact of regulations on the understanding of inclusive education and the definition of its subjects.

In the past decade, inclusive education has become one of the central issues in Polish pedagogy. This discourse has developed in the context of dynamic social transformations: educational reforms, the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitalization of education, and changes in policies supporting pupils with special educational needs.

In the literature from 2017–2025, clear shifts can be observed not only in the understanding of inclusive education itself but, above all, in the way its subjects are defined. The article advances the thesis that the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects evolves from a compensatory model (within a biological paradigm) toward a civic-ecosystemic model (within a humanistic paradigm).

An important reference point for contemporary debates on inclusive education is the critical analysis conducted by Kerstin Göransson and Claes Nilholm.[7] The authors

[5] Dz.U. 2017, poz. 1743; t.j. Dz.U. 2023, poz. 2061.

[6] Draft dated 1.08.2025. Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji z dnia 29 sierpnia 2025 r. w sprawie orzeczeń i opinii wydawanych przez zespoły orzekające działające w publicznych poradniach psychologiczno-pedagogicznych.

[7] K. Göransson, C. Nilholm, *Conceptual diversities and empirical shortcomings – a critical analysis of research on inclusive education*, "European Journal of Special Needs Education" 2014, No. 29(3), pp. 265–280.

attempt to systematize the diverse definitions of educational inclusion and assess the quality of its empirical foundations. Their analysis leads to the conclusion that the concept of inclusive education is heterogeneous and imprecise. Göransson and Nilholm distinguish four basic understandings of inclusion: 1) as the placement of pupils with disabilities in mainstream classrooms; 2) as meeting the social and academic needs of pupils with disabilities; 3) as meeting the social and academic needs of all pupils; 4) as the creation of communities characterized by specific normative features.

The authors emphasize that these definitions reflect different visions of the function of school and different philosophical assumptions regarding its aims. In this sense, inclusion is not merely a technical organizational solution but an expression of a particular philosophy of education. At the same time, they point to serious shortcomings in research on inclusion. When inclusion is defined rigorously – especially in terms that encompass the creation of communities – it becomes difficult to find studies that reliably identify factors leading to inclusive processes in schools. The authors highlight the lack of clear indicators of the outcomes of inclusive practices, insufficient consideration of the perspectives of all pupils, and the rare use of research designs that allow changes over time to be captured. Consequently, they call for greater operational precision in defining inclusion and for the development of new types of empirical research. Their analysis also serves as a warning against equating declarative support for inclusion with its actual implementation and underscores the necessity of closely linking normative reflection with methodological rigor.[8]

Methodological foundations of the analysis

The study is qualitative and metatheoretical in nature. Its aim is to reconstruct the ways in which the concept of inclusive education is understood in Polish pedagogical discourse and to identify and describe how the subjects of inclusive education are defined in the analysed publications. The analysis focuses on the conceptual and argumentative layers of the texts rather than on evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation.

The process of organizing the research material and conducting the preliminary grouping of thematic codes involved the use of an artificial intelligence – based tool – ChatGPT 5.2 (paid version). This tool served a supportive function in organizing textual data, identifying recurring motifs, and synthesizing content. Final interpretative decisions, code assignments, reconstruction of theoretical models, and research conclusions remain exclusively the result of the author's work. The use of the AI tool aligns with the growing body of research on collaboration between humans and artificial intelligence systems in creative and analytical processes.

[8] *Ibidem*.

As Aleksandra Przegalińska and Tamilla Triantoro[9] indicate, cooperation with AI may be understood not as replacing human reflection but as a form of "interpenetration of minds," in which technology supports the generation of new interpretative perspectives and the organization of complex data. In the present study, AI functioned as a tool supporting the qualitative analysis, while full research responsibility remained with the author.

The research material consisted of 76 scholarly articles by Polish authors published in Polish pedagogical journals between 2017 and 2025. Representative material most closely aligned with the research questions was selected for further analysis. Articles were searched in Google Scholar using the keywords: *inclusive education*, *inclusive schooling*, *educational inclusion*. The selection of material was purposive and subordinated to the aim of the study, namely, capturing the ways of conceptualizing inclusion and changes in defining its subjects. Texts included in the analysis met the following criteria: a scholarly article (peer-reviewed publication), Polish authorship and publication in a Polish pedagogical journal, explicit reference to inclusive education in the title, keywords, or content, and the presence of definitions, descriptions, or interpretative reflections concerning inclusive education and/or its subjects.

The analysis proceeded in stages, in accordance with the logic of qualitative content analysis. In the first step, the texts were read in their entirety in order to identify fragments referring to: a) definitions of inclusion and b) subjects of inclusive education. The second step involved qualitative coding encompassing two main fields of codes:

1. Understanding of inclusive education – the codes included, among others, inclusion understood as:
   a) presence/placement in mainstream classrooms;
   b) meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities/SEN;
   c) a school for all (diversity as the norm);
   d) designing learning conditions (e.g., UDL, accessibility);
   e) creating community and school culture;
   f) social/civic transformation.
2. Subjects of inclusive education – the codes included categories such as:
   a) pupil with a disability;
   b) pupil with SEN;
   c) all students (in the "all means all" approach);
   d) teacher (competencies, attitudes, reflexivity);
   e) class/school as a community (relationships, organizational culture);
   f) institutions and system (law, counselling centres, coordination);
   g) networked subject (family–school–institutions; intersectoral cooperation),
   h) civic/ecosystemic subject (inclusion as the foundation of a democratic community).

[9] A. Przegalińska, T. Triantoro, *Przenikanie umysłów. Potencjał twórczy współpracy z AI*, Warszawa 2024, pp. 16–32.

In the third step, the codes were compared diachronically (2017–2025) in order to capture the direction of change in the discourse and to identify dominant definitional and subject configurations.

In the section synthesizing the results, a metatheoretical perspective was applied, which means that the interpretations concerned understandings of inclusive education (both theoretical and empirically grounded) and the relationships between the individual, the community, and the system. Additionally, in order to validate the comparisons, the typology of understandings of inclusive education proposed by Göransson and Nilholm[10] was used.

The research procedure applied is subject to limitations characteristic of qualitative literature analysis. The selection of material was purposive and based on search results from Google Scholar, which means that the analysed set of publications does not fully exhaust the entire corpus of available texts. However, these limitations do not undermine the cognitive value of the study, as its aim was to reconstruct ways of conceptualizing inclusive education and the directions of their transformation, rather than to ensure statistical representativeness of the material.

Results of the qualitative analysis. The evolution of the understanding of inclusive education and its subjects in Polish pedagogical reflection (2017–2025)

The analysis of scholarly articles published in Polish pedagogical journals between 2017 and 2025 makes it possible to identify a clear trajectory of change in the understanding of inclusive education and in the definition of its subjects. These changes are both semantic in nature (an expansion of the scope of the concept of educational inclusion) and ontological (an evolution in the understanding of the subject of inclusive education).

1. From inclusion in education as the implementation of the right to Inclusive education as a cultural project

In the earliest texts that were analysed (2017), inclusive education is defined primarily as the implementation of the right of pupils with disabilities to education within the mainstream system and as a means of counteracting exclusion. Authors such as Krystyna Barłóg,[11] Agata Bogumiła Jardzioch,[12] Beata Skotnicka,[13] and Agnieszka Szpak[14] focus on ensuring access to school, organizational conditions,

[10] K. Göransson, C. Nilholm, *Conceptual diversities*…, p. 268.

[11] K. Barłóg, *Inkluzja społeczna, edukacyjna a problemy młodych osób z ograniczeniami sprawności*, "Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny" 2017, Vol. XXXVI, Issue 2, pp. 171–183.

[12] A.B. Jardzioch, *Edukacja włączająca w Polsce*, "Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna" 2017, No. 3, pp. 193–205.

[13] B. Skotnicka, *Szkoła inkluzyjna jako organizacja ucząca się*, "Niepełnosprawność – zagadnienia, problemy, rozwiązania" 2017, No. III(24), pp. 75–85.

[14] A. Szpak, *Edukacja włączająca uczniów niepełnosprawnych – aktualne wyzwania*, "Zbliżenia Cywilizacyjne" 2017, Vol. XIII, No. 4, pp. 12–45.

and support. Inclusion here has a normative-legal character and constitutes either a development of or a correction to the earlier integrative model.

In 2018–2019, a clear shift in emphasis could be observed. Authors (including Iwona Chrzanowska,[15] Grażyna Dryżałowska,[16] Zenon Gajdzica,[17] and Beata Antoszewska and Małgorzata Moszyńska[18]) reflected on the social model of disability and on the tensions between declarative inclusion and its practical implementation. Inclusion ceased to be identified solely with a pupil's presence in a mainstream classroom and began to be understood as a transformation of school culture and as an axiological project grounded in diversity as a norm. A critical distinction between integration and inclusion in education emerged, along with reflection on the responsibility of the state for the success of inclusive education.

2. Inclusive education as environmental design and a systemic process

In 2020 texts (including Dorota Chimicz,[19] Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa,[20] and Renata Kołodziejczyk[21]), a further deepening of the concept of inclusive education is visible. It becomes linked to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), accessibility, the use of assistive technologies, and the deconstruction of the category of the norm. Inclusion begins to be understood as a philosophy of designing the learning environment rather than solely as support for a specific group of pupils.

In 2021–2022 (Chrzanowska,[22] Ewa Domagała-Zyśk,[23] Dorota Podgórska-Jachnik,[24] Barbara Dobrowolska,[25] and Gajdzica[26]), inclusion is framed as a multi-level

[15] I. Chrzanowska, *Edukacja włączająca – wyzwanie dla kompetencji pedagogów specjalnych*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2018, No. 48, pp. 23–32.

[16] G. Dryżałowska, *Wyobcowani w integracji a edukacja włączająca*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2018, No. 29, pp. 28–42.

[17] Z. Gajdzica, *Wybrane aspekty czasu w dwóch koncepcjach edukacji włączającej uczniów z niepełnosprawnością*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 2019, No. 3(253), pp. 42–55.

[18] B. Antoszewska, M. Moszyńska, *Doświadczenia nauczycieli szkół przyszpitalnych w paradygmacie inkluzji ucznia ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny" 2019, No. 3(253), pp. 194–206.

[19] D. Chimicz, *Wykorzystanie technologii wspomagających uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami w edukacji włączającej*, "Szkoła Specjalna" 2020, No. 3, pp. 175–187.

[20] J. Rzeźnicka-Krupa, *Konstruktywizm i pedagogika różnorodności w kontekście edukacji włączającej*, "Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji" 2020, No. 4(51), pp. 153–166.

[21] R. Kołodziejczyk, *Gotowość nauczycieli do pracy w systemie edukacji włączającej*, "Roczniki Pedagogiczne" 2020, Vol. 12(48), No. 3, pp. 125–142.

[22] I. Chrzanowska, *Kultura szkoły – wyzwanie dla włączającego kształcenia*, "Pedagogika Społeczna Nova", 2021, Vol. 1, No. 2, s. 13–28.

[23] E. Domagała-Zyśk, *Mentoring w kształceniu pedagogów dla edukacji włączającej*, "Edukacja" 2021, No. 1(155), pp. 31–41.

[24] D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Polski system oświaty a edukacja włączająca – bilans otwarcia 2020 w świetle raportu badawczego Ośrodka Rozwoju Edukacji*, "Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze" 2022, No. 5, pp. 5–16.

[25] B. Dobrowolska, *Szkoła a działania inkluzyjne – stanowiska teoretyczne, uwarunkowania prawne a edukacja rzeczywistości*, "Student Niepełnosprawny. Szkice i Rozprawy" 2022, No. 22(15), pp. 26–42.

[26] Z. Gajdzica, *Nieobecne lub zaniedbane w polskiej szkole formy wspierania nauczycieli w edukacji włączającej*, "Studia z Teorii Wychowania" 2022, Vol. XIII, No. 3(40), pp. 13–28.

process – encompassing the level of the class, school, system, and social policy. In the texts analysed, the formula "all means all" appears, and educational inclusion is extended to pupils with experiences of migration, poverty, or other forms of marginalization. This signifies a departure from a categorical approach toward a systemic–cultural model.

3. Inclusive education as a network of shared responsibility and a civic project

Publications from 2023–2024 (including Amadeusz Krause,[27] Joanna Kossewska et al.,[28] Zenon Gajdzica, Edyta Widawska, and Beata Jachimczak,[29] Małgorzata Zaborniak-Sobczak,[30] and Patryk Gutowski[31]), contain a strong critical component. The authors point to discrepancies between declarations of inclusivity and actual school practices, as well as to the need for intersectoral cooperation (education–health–social assistance). Inclusive education is defined as a strategy requiring the coordination of actions, the management of complexity, and the consideration of accessibility, including digital accessibility.

In 2025 (Monika Chełchowska,[32] Dagmara Kubiak-Kazuła and Jolanta Rzeźnicka-Krupa,[33] Agnieszka Olechowska,[34] and Stanisława Nazaruk et al.[35]), inclusion in education takes the form of a mature systemic paradigm. On the one hand, the importance of teacher professionalism and the role of psychological-pedagogical counselling centres as institutions co-creating support pathways are emphasized; on the other hand, inclusion is linked to the building of a civil society and a democratic culture. The school is presented as a microcosm of the community in which the values of equality, pluralism, and shared responsibility are enacted.

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[27] A. Krause, *Edukacja włączająca w cieniu ideologii zachwytu i opresji*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2023, No. 50, pp. 11–21.

[28] J. Kossewska, K. Rofiah, V.K. Herviani, K. Sheehy, *Postawy nauczycieli wobec edukacji włączającej. Przegląd systematyczny*, "Niepełnosprawność i Rehabilitacja" 2023, No. 2, pp. 69–91.

[29] Z. Gajdzica, E. Widawska, B. Jachimczak, *Współpraca wewnątrz- i międzysektorowa jako element wsparcia edukacji włączającej*, "Forum Nauk Społecznych" 2024, No. 2, pp. 113–124.

[30] M. Zaborniak-Sobczak, *Rola poradni psychologiczno-pedagogicznych w systemowym wsparciu uczniów i edukacji włączającej*, "Horyzonty Wychowania" 2024, No. 23(68), pp. 57–67.

[31] P. Gutowski, *Dostępność cyfrowa jako aspekt edukacji włączającej*, "Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej" 2024, No. 52, pp. 47–62.

[32] M. Chełchowska, *Kompetencje nauczycieli w edukacji włączającej*, "Forum Nauk Społecznych" 2025, No. 3, pp. 113–127.

[33] D. Kubiak-Kazuła, J. Rzeźnicka-Krupa, *Edukacja włączająca a budowanie społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, "Colloquium" 2025, No. 3(59), pp. 7–87.

[34] A. Olechowska, *Dobre praktyki szkoły włączającej*, "Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze" 2025, No. 7, pp. 18–28.

[35] S. Nazaruk, H. Konowaluk-Nikitin, J. Waszczuk, A. Majewska, K. Sienkiewicz, *W stronę edukacji włączającej. Doniesienie z badań poradni psychologiczno-pedagogicznyc*h, "Społeczeństwo. Edukacja. Język" 2025, Vol. 21, pp. 138–150.

Evolution of the subjects of inclusive education

Parallel to definitional changes, a transformation occurs in the understanding of the subject of inclusive education.

1. **Protected subject** – the pupil with a disability as the holder of the right to inclusion (Barłóg; Jardzioch).
2. **Relational subject** – every pupil within the context of the classroom community; the teacher as a mediator of values (Chrzanowska; Gajdzica).
3. **Agentic and constructivist subject** – the student as a co-constructor of knowledge, the teacher as a designer of the learning environment (Chimicz; Rzeźnicka-Krupa).
4. **Systemic subject** – the student, the teacher, the school, and state as elements of a multi-level system (Podgórska-Jachnik; Dobrowolska).
5. **Network and institutional subject** – the student together with his/her family and support institutions; counselling centres and co-organizers as co-creators of inclusion (Gajdzica, Widawska, and Jachimczak; Zaborniak-Sobczak).
6. **Civic and ecosystemic subject** – the student as a future citizen, the teacher as a key agent of change, the school as a democratic community (Kubiak-Kazuła and Rzeźnicka-Krupa; Olechowska).

In summary, the qualitative analysis indicates a clear evolution from inclusive education understood as incorporating students with disabilities into the education system toward inclusion conceived as a transformation of school culture and a civic project. At the same time, the subject of inclusive education transitions from being a recipient of support to becoming a co-responsible participant in the community and an element of the educational ecosystem. These changes confirm that in the years 2017–2025, inclusion ceased to be merely an organizational solution and became a normative and systemic category, redefining both the role of the school and the relationships among its participants.

An attempt to redefine inclusive education

Based on the analyses conducted, inclusive education may be redefined as a "multi-level, systemic, and axiologically grounded process of designing a learning environment, the aim of which is to ensure each person's genuine participation, agency, and recognition within a diverse educational community."

Inclusive education is not merely an organizational strategy or a set of solutions dedicated to a specific group of pupils. It constitutes a dynamic paradigm of shaping the school, in which diversity is treated as the norm rather than a deviation from the norm. This represents a departure from the compensatory model – focused on "fixing" the individual – toward a transformative model, in which the system, the

school culture, and the teaching practices are subject to continuous modification in response to the diverse needs and potentials of learners.

In this perspective, inclusion signifies not only the right to attend school but the right to full participation, encompassing access to knowledge, social relationships, opportunities for co-decision-making, and co-creation of the learning environment. It is simultaneously a pedagogical project and, more broadly, a civic one; it shapes a culture of mutual recognition, responsibility, and cooperation, preparing individuals to function in a pluralistic society.

The redefinition of inclusive education is accompanied by a transformation in the understanding of its subject. The subject of inclusive education is not solely a pupil with a disability, nor even a "pupil with special educational needs." The subject is relational and ecosystemic in character. It includes: the pupil as a person with individual needs, capacities, and aspirations; the teacher as a reflective professional and co-creator of the environment; the school community as a space of shared responsibility; support institutions; and the education system as an organizational and normative framework.

Subjectivity in inclusive education signifies the capacity for participation, influence, and co-creation. It is not given once and for all but is constructed within relationships, practices, and institutional structures. In this sense, inclusive education redefines both who the pupil is and what the school is – transforming it from a selective institution into a community-based environment open to diversity and responsible for the developmental conditions of each participant.

Comparison of the evolutionary model (2017–2025) with the typology of inclusive education in the concept of Göransson and Nilholm

In order to validate the developed model of the evolutionary understanding of inclusive education in Poland between 2017 and 2025, its assumptions were compared with the analysis conducted by Göransson and Nilholm. By examining highly cited European and North American articles, the authors demonstrated significant definitional heterogeneity in the concept of educational inclusion and distinguished four dominant understandings, discussed in the Introduction. A comparison of this typology with the results of the present analysis indicates a high degree of structural convergence, while simultaneously revealing a different developmental dynamic. In the Polish pedagogical discourse of the 2017–2025 period, these understandings not only coexist but also form a clear evolutionary trajectory.

In the years 2017–2018, the dominant approach is close to category (a) and focuses on the needs of pupils with disabilities – inclusion is defined as the implementation of the right to education in mainstream schools and as counteracting exclusion. In the years 2019–2022, we observe a shift toward understanding inclusion as a transformation of school culture and a response to the needs of all pupils,

which corresponds to the third category (c) identified by Göransson and Nilholm. In 2023–2025, however, the understanding of inclusion increasingly takes the form of building a community and a civic project, corresponding to the fourth category (d) – the creation of communities.

The 2017–2025 evolutionary model confirms Göransson and Nilholm's thesis regarding the multidimensionality of the concept of inclusive education and the need for a precise operational definition of the term in empirical research. The model also indicates that within the analysed national discourse, the various understandings of inclusion form a sequence of shifts – from a compensatory – legal approach toward a systemic – community model.

An important point of convergence between the two analyses is the tension between inclusion as a normative ideal and its research operationalization. Göransson and Nilholm observe that, under a narrow and rigorous understanding of inclusion, it becomes difficult to identify solid empirical evidence for the factors leading to inclusive processes. A similar tension appears in Polish publications, where developed theoretical and axiological reflections do not always translate into clearly defined indicators of practice.

Particularly significant is the comparison regarding the understanding of the subjects of inclusive education. The typology of Göransson and Nilholm implies a broadening of the subject of inclusion: from the pupil with a disability, through all pupils, to the community as a whole. The analysis of material from 2017–2025 confirms this direction. The subject evolves from a "recipient of support" to a participant in relationships, then to an element of the system, and most recently – to a co-responsible citizen functioning within the educational ecosystem. Thus, the evolutionary model does not only align with the four categories distinguished by Göransson and Nilholm but also extends them by adding a dynamic and systemic dimension.

In summary, the comparison indicates a directional convergence between the international analysis and the findings of research on Polish pedagogical discourse. At the same time, the evolutionary model (2017–2025) demonstrates that the broadening of the meaning of inclusive education is accompanied by a parallel expansion in the understanding of its subject – from an individual requiring support to a community and ecosystem responsible for the conditions of participation.

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