

Criminals with Special Needs: the need to Holistically Include them as a Means to Prevent Crime



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Submission: May 06, 2017; **Published:** May 24, 2017

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Opinion

In our turbulent world, violence reigns in most manifestations of our life and in different forms (inter- and intra-personal, social, inter-racial, international). Violence produces and reproduces violence, creating a vicious circle and in fact this starts from early age, in educational settings where students-growing and developing personalities-first test their limits and boundaries in the school society, learn rules, how to be normal so they can be accepted (a desire which holds a tremendous value for them, especially during the school years) and how to navigate in the complex as well as challenging dynamics of the school community.

For some individuals, this might prove even more challenging. They are different, strange, weird: they are challenged emotionally or psychologically (e.g. diagnosed with depressive mood) or socially, finding difficulty in being connected with peers (e.g. diagnosed with Autism/Asperger's) or struggling in Language Classes (e.g. Dyslexia) or in STEM subjects (e.g. Dyspraxia) and many more. They are not accepted, often, even being bullied (in physical form or cyber-bullying or other forms) due to their different appearance or behavior and if the community does not have efficient services in place, able to detect but also cure the situation at an early stage, in the mind of a bullied young person, shame, anger and desire of revenge are a dangerous mixture.

It is vital that we as part of our social ecosystem-make sure we are on track with situations like the abovementioned. Detecting the discomfort felt by many individuals with special/additional needs, having our emotional intelligence radar in full function, supporting and helping our families, friends, colleagues and lending an ear to individuals outside our comfort zone, outside our categories and mental boxes. As teachers, first

of all, it is important to be part of an ecosystem in school that truly and really respects all different forms of personalities and free expression of one-self. Like the natural ecosystems depend upon their elements, from the largest, biggest, stronger to smaller, less strong atoms, in the same fashion, schools function as ecosystems.

But what is inclusion of learners with special needs? Is physical placement of a kid with special student in a class, inclusion? Inclusion starts first and foremost, from our decision to challenge concepts about disability (either mental or physical or both) to reflect on our own fears of being/ becoming disabled and to re-visit our everyday attitude towards disabled individuals. Inclusion is not simply a series of good intentions, not just a statement or a famous quote hanging on a wall: it is a strategy based on informed decisions about how a school views diversity, freedom and disability issues, it is Inclusive Theory and Practice harmonically combined with the goal to holistically include every learner while respecting their uniqueness, in a meaningful way. To elaborate furthermore on holistic and meaningful inclusion, this requires the support of all parts of the school, community, society and should multi-leveled, meaning social, behavioral, learning, educational, job opportunity.

Inclusion of all, will serve as a way to prevent anger transforming into violence abuse or bullying and of course, in the last form of crime which take various form. Acknowledging that discomfort and bullying can potentially produce criminals with resentment for their past experiences will result in realizing the need to put services in place for all students and all individuals. A vicious circle of crime could be cut if we decide that all parts of our social ecosystem are equally important, starting from schools and moving into society schemes.



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DOI: 10.19080/JFSCI.2017.03.555612

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