**Reflection 1 - Evolution of Inclusion**

Terri Wilkinson

University of Northern British Columbia

EDUC 336 - Inclusive Education

Melanie Baerg

July 14, 2024

Reflection 1 - Evolution of Inclusion

 After doing the reading for the first week of this course the thing that stood out the most to me was how much inclusion has changed over the years. I honestly think we can say the world has come a long way for the better, and we keep moving forward in great ways.

The concept of inclusion in education and society has had significant transformation over the past several decades. Historically, individuals with disabilities were often marginalized and segregated from mainstream society. The PBS special we watched for one of our assignments “I go home” provides a look at how the institutionalization of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were treated behind closed doors. I found this very emotional to watch, very disturbing to know that humans had to go through this and glad that the places were shut down eventually. Watching this reminded me of the mental hospital/jail in the town I grew up in. I don’t know anyone personally that went there but have heard some pretty disturbing stories over the years, including that Paul Bernardo went there.

Overall, this era was characterized by lack of understanding and acceptance, where the focus was on containment rather than integration. The special talks about the social belief at the time was that individuals with disabilities were better off hidden away. This belief led to widespread stigma and discrimination.

The mid-20th century marked the beginning of a shift towards more inclusive practices. Help from parents, educators and people with disabilities started to gain momentum. The Inclusion Outreach timeline from Open Schools BC highlights critical legislative milestones, such as 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which mandated that children with disabilities have the right to free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

These legal advancements laid the groundwork for more inclusive educational settings, challenging the notion that segregation was necessary or beneficial. Schools began to explore ways to integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms, though initial efforts often faced resistance and were limited.

Shelly Moore’s book “One Without the Other” dives into the ongoing evolution of inclusion from a more contemporary perspective. In the chapters we have read to this point, Shelly shares personal and professional experiences that illustrate the shift from physical integration to genuine inclusion. She emphasizes the importance of belonging, advocating for educational environments where all students, regardless of ability, are valued and actively participate. I think some of her ideas sound great on paper but I am left to question if she has been in a classroom in a while because it seems not all ideas will work, but I am open to learning more of the how.

Over all the evolution of inclusion reflects broader changes in attitudes towards disability and difference. From the days of institutionalization depicted in “I Go Home” to the more accepting and holistic approaches advocated by Shelly Moore, the path has been towards recognizing and celebrating the worth and potential of every individual. As I look to the future, I hope to see more change in education and in society as a whole.

**References**

1. *A brief timeline of the history of people with disabilities*. Complete Timeline | A Brief Timeline of the History of People with Disabilities. (n.d.). <https://openschool.bc.ca/inclusionoutreach/timeline/timeline.html>
2. Moore, S. (2017). *One without the other*. Portage and Main Press.
3. Public Broadcasting Service. (2016, April 20). *WITF*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/video/witf-i-go-home/>