

A fresh look at Special Education in Cuba,
based on the concept of disability according to
the ICF

Mirtha Leyva Fuentes

School Psychologist, Provincial Center of Diagnosis, Havana

Cuba

mirthalia@infomed.sld.cu

Abstract

Approval of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) at the 54th World Health Assembly in 2001 gave rise to the new concept of Disability and the new Classification which today are considered central to the International Family of Classifications, along with the ICD-10. Theoretical criteria from a bio-psycho-social model, underpinning the ICF, entered into conflict with the concept of disability which was in force until that time (and others), and which was associated with the old Classification known as the ICIDH. Changes in the way of thinking about persons with disability and about the services and support provided them are the most significant consequence of the ICF. In Cuba, these changes are yet to come, so we have focused our work on the changes that are to occur within Cuban educational practice, and more specifically, in Special Education in Cuba. Along these lines we propose taking a fresh look at the behaviors, actions and purposes that are being carried out or are to be implemented, whether at a special school or not, and which later will result in greater quality of life -- based on analysis of results in the individuals' personal activity and social participation. Toward that end, we feel that the goal should be seen as reaching the lowest possible level of limitations and restrictions, according to type of disability.

This research is theoretical and carries out an analysis of how these changes should be interpreted and transferred into Cuban educational practice.

Key words: Cuba. Special Education. Disability. ICF.