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STUDY REGARDING THE INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH
ADHD IN MASS KINDERGARTENS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the training needs of teachers in the field of inclusive education, with an emphasis on the inclusion of children with ADHD, in order to establish a positive attitude towards the practice of integrating children with this type of condition in the kindergarten. Thirty kindergarten teachers from Cluj-Napoca, who deal with the inclusion process of children with ADHD into the groups of neuro-typical children were selected, for this study. They are aged between 20 and 50, having a teaching experience of 1 to 30 years. The method used for this study was the survey, and the study instrument was the questionnaire. An opinion questionnaire was used to collect the data, highlighting formal and informal training as well as teachers' attitudes regarding the integration of children with ADHD in schools and kindergartens. The aim of the questionnaire used in the investigation is expressing opinions and options by the teachers from mainstream education, depending on certain specific criteria related to the integration process.

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1. Introduction

The integration of children with special educational needs (Vrășmaș & Mușu, 1998), stressing ADHD, involves using certain interventions strategies of psychopadagogy aiming to prevent the prevention and correction of unwanted behaviour in the social and school environment, strengthening certain favourable attitudes towards the other pre-schoolers and the teachers, of the child. The teacher, from the perspective of the group management, is supposed to implement a counseling activity (Iucu, 2006), in order to support these children. Throughout the learning activities, teachers will pay special attention to the process of evaluation which can support methods and techniques where, through giving certain rewards (in our case, appreciation in front of the colleagues or receiving verbal acclaim etc.) certain unwanted behaviours can be stopped and some positive behaviour can be reinforced. The educator will adopt a teaching style that leaves no room for dogmatism and authoritarianism, behaviors that would lead to rigidity, stereotype, uniformity and finally, inefficiency in teaching (Albulescu, 2008). Moreover, the educational activity with the pre-schoolers that face behaviour disorders requires that teachers have an extensive knowledge of human nature, of strategies of knowing children's personality and an extraordinary empathic capacity to understand and accept those around them as they are, unique and different.

The teacher is involved in the educational activity with his entire personality: motivation, skills, level of competence, personal experience. This involvement is not limited to the transmission of information, but involves a certain attitude towards children, in particular towards children with ADHD (Kilian & Albulescu, 2009).

The diagnosis of ADHD is complicated, complex and often subjective and this is why it is necessary to relate it to all types and sources of information available on the child's condition, starting from the behaviour that can be observed in accordance to factors such as school results or the level of social integration (Popenici, Fartușnic, & Târnoveanu, 2008).

ADHD represents a more and more serious public health issue and the effects of mistreating it have extremely severe entailment on a personal and social level. Children with ADHD have significant disadvantages on a long term regarding the academic performance, vocational achievements and social-emotional evolution, which are elements that impact significantly the family, the classmates, the school and the society (Egan & Popenici, 2007).

2. Problem Statement

This study aimed at investigating the attendance of children with ADHD in mass kindergartens in Cluj-Napoca as well as the level of education of the teachers related to the topic of integrated education, especially ADHD.

3. Research Questions

Hypothesis

According to unofficial data, is accredited the idea of an increase in the level of frequency of children with ADHD in the school network. Starting from this assumption we consider as a working hypothesis the following: *important attendance for children with ADHD is recorded based on the size of the class of pre-schoolers, based on the level of preparedness of the kindergarten and of the teachers to educate children with ADHD* depending on other specific factors.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the formation needs of the teachers in the integrated education, stressing ADHD, to determine in them the structuring of a positive attitude with respect to the practice of integrating children with these disorders in mass kindergartens.

Objectives of the study

- To establish the frequency of children with ADHD (children diagnosed by specialists and children declared by the teacher) in mass kindergartens from Cluj-Napoca
- To identify the level of knowledge and the level of education of the teachers regarding the integrated education, emphasizing ADHD
- To observe the various educational strategies adopted in the education of children with special needs, especially children with ADHD
- To project a program of formal and informal preparation of the teachers in respect to children with ADHD.

5. Research Methods

For the completion of this study thirty teachers had been selected from the mass kindergartens of Cluj county that face the problem of integrating children with ADHD in the groups of children they are working with. They are between 20 and 50 years old and have an experience between 1 and 30 years.

In the research, **the tool** used was **the questionnaire**.

To collect data, a **survey** was used to highlight the attendance of children with *ADHD* in *kindergartens of Cluj-Napoca*, the formal and informal education of the teachers regarding the integration of children with *ADHD*, the knowledge and application of adequate educational strategies as well as the necessity to introduce a training programme regarding *ADHD*. The survey used in the investigation aims at expressing some opinions and options of the teachers in the mass education system, depending on specific criteria of the integration process.

According to the established objectives and the stated hypotheses, we applied a survey with items that require answers using the Likert (1-10) scale, dichotomous and open answers, which offers great possibilities of expression for the teachers, giving this survey a high internal consistency.

The first step consisted in establishing the methods and the instruments needed for research and doing an analysis regarding the attendance of children with advanced in mass kindergartens of Cluj-Napoca and the difficulties that the teachers working with these children face. *The second step* consisted in creating a survey, based on the observations and the ascertainment we had after this analysis. In the third step the survey was applied and the results were interpreted.

Throughout the investigation we had three meetings with the teachers, which occurred as follows: during the first meeting we discussed about the attendance of children with ADHD in the classes in which they teach and the difficulties they face, in the second meeting the survey was given to each teacher and it was explained, mentioning that it has to be completed in three days' time, so that each item could be examined and to have a full perspective of the integration process from a personal perspective and in the third meeting we discussed on the survey and we received the complete survey.

6. Findings

Analysing results

For the question "have you ever denied the integration of children with ADHD", 86% of the teachers answered "no" and 14% answered "yes", these mentioning that they refused the integration of these children due to the fact that they do not know how to rapport to their eventual difficulties.

23, 8% of the teachers estimate that the most important factor of integration is "**the group of specialists in the kindergarten**" while 23, 8% believe that "**the socio-emotional relationships established between child-child and child-teacher**", 9, 5% considering that "**the differentiating activities and evaluation**" is the most important factor of integration. The other teachers answered with a combination of these enquiries.

For the question: What is, in your opinion, the main reason why some children suffering from ADHD are **marginalised or excluded** from mass kindergartens, 33, 33% of the teachers considered "**the lack of special education and experience of the teachers**" is the main cause of the marginalisation and exclusion of children with ADHD from mass kindergartens, 19, 04% estimating that "**the reduced understanding of these children's needs**" is the main cause. 14, 28% consider that both versions described above are the main cause while 9, 52% estimate that "**the inability of facing the requirements of mass kindergartens**" as the cause of marginalisation and exclusion of the children with ADHD from mass schools.

38, 09% of the participants in this survey judge their level of education at 5 (on a scale from 0 to 10), 19.04% estimating the knowledge at 6, 9.52% at 3 and 4, 76% at 10. 96% of the teachers stated that they "**haven't taken special courses**" for formal and informal education in the field of integrated education, especially ADHD, while 6% admitted that they have taken this type of courses.

61, 9% estimated at 10 (on a scale from 0 to 10) **the need to participate in formation courses** to be able to work with children with ADHD and 9, 52% estimated 5 at this necessity.

7. Conclusion

Conclusions regarding **the attendance** of children with **ADHD** in mass kindergartens of Cluj-Napoca.

According to the aims, we can observe the following:

- Important frequencies of children with ADHD (7% -12%) are registered in groups where the total number of pupils is high (28 - 30 pupils)
- Important frequencies of children with ADHD (7% - 12%) are registered in the groups where the teacher has an appropriate level of education, formal and informal (a level of education > 50% according the norms of interpreting results) for educating children with ADHD.
- Regarding the level of school results of children with ADHD from the groups whose teachers are involved in this study: 53% of the pre-schoolers have a satisfactory level of school results, 26,5% have a good level, 8,5% have a very good level and 12% have an insufficient level of school results.

Regarding **the level of formal and informal education**, we concluded he following:

- According to the criteria of results appreciation, we got the following distribution of marking: 5 subjects – very good, 4 subjects – good, 6 subjects- satisfactory and 6 subjects-unsatisfactory.
- only 6% of the teachers involved in the survey had taken special courses, the information they had regarding this disorder being obtained from a variety of other sources
- only 57% of the questioned teachers managed to list the main characteristics of ADHD
- Among the most important factors that are thought to represent the base of integration: 71, 5 mention the “curricular adjustment up to personalisation”, “differentiated activities and evaluation” and “socio-emotional child-child and child-teacher relationships”. 28, 5% estimate that the most important factor is the group of specialists in a kindergarten.
- For the question “have you ever denied the integration of children with ADHD”, 86% of the teachers answered “no” and surprisingly, 14% answered “yes”.

Regarding the **necessity of participating in actions and special programmes** of formation in the integrated education, especially ADHD, 62% of the teachers judge the maximum level (10), even if the majority of the questioned appreciate their level of knowledge between 3-8 (on a Likert scale from 1-10) and only 6% followed special training courses in this field.

In respect to the **educational strategies** suggested by the teachers, we can observe the following: most of them suggest a lower number of pre-schoolers in groups and the formation of teachers would help the good development of the educational activities. It is important to mention that only 71, 4% of the participants answered this question and only 15% gave concrete ideas for class management.

Implementing among the teachers of a formal and informal formation regarding ADHD determines the structuring in these of a positive attitude in regard to the practice of integrating children with this disorder in mass kindergartens.

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