

ERD 2021**9th International Conference Education, Reflection, Development****DIVERSITY SCHOOL'S PRAGMATISM FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

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Abstract

The concept of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was launched in 1978 in the United Kingdom and was later debated in Cardiff in 1990 by the International Congress on Special Education - "Special-Real or Artificial Educational Needs?" and at the Jomtien International Conference, Thailand (1990). The term was further adopted by UNESCO. In order to better understand the concept of Special Educational Needs, it is necessary, first of all, to approach it in order to highlight the learning and not the particularities that delimit the children in this general process of formation and development of individuality. Typologies of special educational needs include: emotional and behavioral disorders, mental retardation / retardation, physical / motor impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, language disorders, learning disabilities / difficulties / learning difficulties. Without a proper approach to these special requirements, we cannot really talk about equal opportunities and school or social integration. An alternative formula is that of special requirements / needs, with a semantic scope usually wider, including, among the criteria mentioned above, others such as: children from social backgrounds and disadvantaged families, institutionalized children, delinquent children, children who belong to ethnic or religious minorities, street children, children abused or abused physically and mentally, children suffering from chronic conditions. All these children need affection and security, positive appreciation and reinforcement, self-confidence, responsibility and independence, etc. However, they are different when it comes to temperament, abilities, motivation. It is important that they grow and develop together without transforming the differences in barriers.

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1. Introduction

The Special Educational Needs concept (SEN) was launched in 1978, in Great Britain, subsequently being debated in Cardiff, in 1990, by the Special Education International Congress – “Special educational needs-real or artificial?” and by the International Conference of Jomtien, Thailand (1990).

The expression has been further taken over by UNESCO (since 1995). For a better understanding of the Special Educational Needs concept is required, above all, to approach this in order to emphasize learning and not the particularities that delimit children in this general formation and development process of individuality. “Every child has his characteristics, interests, abilities and unique learning needs and this is why, in order for the right of education to be meaningful, educational systems must be designed and educational programmes implemented, ones that can take into consideration the wide diversity of these needs and characteristics.” (The UNESCO Salamanca Statement, 1994). The typology of the special educational needs’ categories include: emotional and behaviour disorders, mental deficiency/delay, physical/motor delays, visual deficiencies, additive deficiencies, language commotions, learning disorders/difficulties/disabilities. Without a proper approach of these special requirements we cannot genuinely talk about the equality of access chances/premises, participation and scholar and social integration. An alternative formula is the one of special requirements/needs, with a semantic sphere usually more wide, including, among the above mentioned criteria, other ones like: children that come from social environments and disadvantaged families, institutionalized children (from placement centres), delinquent children, children that belong to ethnic or religious minorities, street children, abused or physically and psychically maltreated children, children who suffer of chronic conditions (TBC, HIV-SIDA, diabetes etc.). All these children categories have the same basic needs regarding grow and development as the others – the need for affection and security, for appreciation and positive strengthening, for self-confidence, for responsibility and independence etc. Even within the same category, children are different as long as the temperament, capacities, motivation are concerned. It is important for them to grow and develop together, without transforming the differences in barriers.

2. Problem Statement

Although the specialty literature provides unlimited explanations of the syntagma, SEN represents a relevant form in a pedagogue plan, because it targets with clarity the necessity for the evaluation and educational demarche’s individuality, the multifactorial and dynamic analysis of the scholar failure causes. The school integrating the SEN pupils does this considering the educational perspective and not the medical one as it used to. Alois Gherguț (2006) stated that this understanding manner is closer to the ideal of the school of future which is aimed to offer services to the variety of the educational needs expressed by different children, without becoming an exclusive environment.

We must consider the fact that every child has his own individuality, no matter they have SEN or not. SEN pupils are different one to another as any other child. Even if a pupil is “labeled” due to his special needs, it does not mean that his needs are exactly the same as the ones of a person in the same situation. According to Păunescu and Mușu (1997), integration is a complex action that through

strategies, makes the student with SEN compatible with society, the benefits being bilateral. As is mentioned in the volume *Integration into the community of children with special educational needs* (Vrășmaș et al., 1996) it is important that in the process of working with a SEN student, all areas where they may encounter difficulties should be considered.

3. Research Questions

In the context of inclusive education, ensuring the equity is very important, so the scholars and young people with SEN can reach their potential and aspirations and to gain knowledge and skills that are applicable and useful in the daily life. Without a correct and real approach, an equalization of the chances/premises of scholar and social integration of children/pupils with special educational needs is not possible.

According to OECD (2006), school integration is a complex process, which demands a common effort of the managers, teachers, pupils and parents. Planning the inclusive education leads to improving the resilience of the educational system, in the same time having a positive social and economic impact among SEN children's families. The questions that are to be put in the context are related to "how do we plan the success of an integrative school?", "how do we evaluate the progress of a school that integrates SEN children?" or "what is the vision of the teachers regarding the integration of this pupils?"

For a sure accomplishment, we will plan short term activities, medium or long, according to the priorities as is mentioned in the guide *National strategy on the education of persons with special educational requirements in the context of inclusive education* elaborated by MECTS, UNICEF & Asociatia RENINCO. (2010). Therefore, on short term, the school can plan activities aimed to identify the pupils with special educational needs, to collaborate with their families, to adapt the support given through personalized intervention plans. On medium term, planning these activities must take into consideration adopting the strategies that are meant to reduce school dropouts of SEN pupils, supporting the access to all the learning resources, as well as caring the socio-emotional wealth. On long term, the school targets a modern informatic system which will offer sensitive data about the monitoring systems of SEN pupils, a good intersectorial coordination regarding the complex identification and evaluation, the school and professional orientation of those.

Regarding the assesment process of the development level and integration process, the school must take into consideration the social adjustment of the SEN child. The evaluation methods are diverse and the following will be reminded: intelligence tests, adder and formative evaluation tests, daily/periodic evaluations. We will not consider only the pupil when we measure the integration grade, but we will consider also the social environment's attitude: managers, teachers and parents. We will enforce interviews and questionnaires and analyze the products of activity, statistic research or opinion surveys.

4. Purpose of the Study

To realize this research, we had proposed an online questionnaire: "The attitude of teachers regarding the integration of pupils with special educational needs in the mass education." The questionnaire was shared in the online environment, 60 teachers responded. It highlights their attitude

regarding SEN pupils' integration. Among the teachers who responded, some of them teach to SEN pupils. The questionnaire is adapted by prof. Vasile Preda and prof. Natala Misail of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The questionnaire was elaborated by a group of researchers from Quebec University, Canada, in 1993 and adapted by Natala Misail and Vasile Preda in 1996.

5. Research Methods

The research based on the questionnaire was applied on a 60 teachers lot:

60 teachers from "Mihai Eminescu Middle School", Năsăud, Bistrița-Năsăud;

60 teachers from the integrative schools in Bistrita-Nasaud county, urban and rural area.

The participation was voluntary. GDPR rules regarding anonymity were respected. No names, telephone numbers or addresses were required, only the teaching area was demanded to be mentioned.

Due to the fact the questionnaire was shared online, the data collection was made automatically, in a separate way for teachers in urban areas and rural ones.

The questionnaire was submitted in May-June 2021. Appendix no. 1

6. Findings

The majority of the respondents are teachers of primary education (Figure 1).

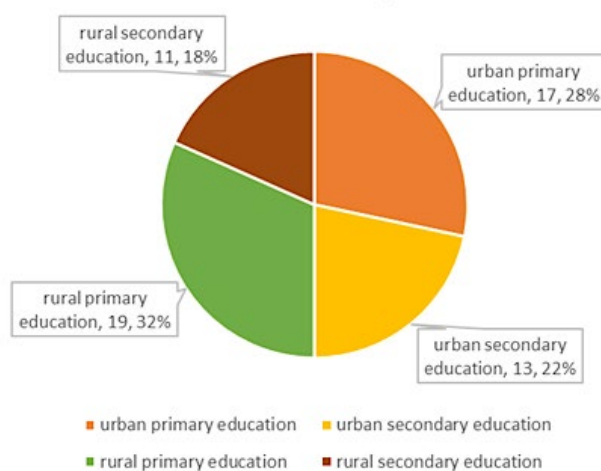


Figure 1. The description of the respondents' sample

The questionnaire contains 49 items, the subject expressing his/her consent or disagreement.

The items are grouped according to the content in five categories:

The attitude of teachers regarding the integration of pupils with special educational needs in regular education (items no. 1, 39, 40, 41).

Factors that consider the nature, type and grade of deficiency (items no. 2, 3, 4, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 44, 49)

Pedagogue factors (items no. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48)

Factors that target financial, material and human resources involved in the integration process (items no. 5, 14, 15, 16, 17).

Family factors (items no. 37, 38)

Table 1. Quotation of items

ITEMS	YES	NO
1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49	5 points	1 point
4, 9, 10, 22, 24, 29, 32, 35, 40, 43, 44	1 point	5 points

Note: Tabel no. 1 shows the score given to respondents for each type of item

1. I consider that the integration of pupils with adaptation and learning difficulties must be encouraged.
2. In my opinion, there will always be pupils with adaptation and learning difficulties who will never be integrated in an usual class.
3. The school is capable of integrating pupils with any adaptation and learning difficulties/ special education needs.
4. It is way easier to integrate in a usual class a physically defficient pupil that one with mental disorders.
5. I consider that the economic rationalities must be the decisive factor in obtaining the integration.
6. I consider that before deciding the matter of integration, the elaboration of an intervention plan must be ensured first.
7. Before deciding upon the integration, it should be verified if the roles and tasks of each category of persons that intervene were clarified. (managers, teachers, specialists etc.)
8. In my opinion, the integration decision should be taken only after a grounded “case study” and only after consulting different cointerested factors.
9. I consider that the managers must solely decide if the pupil should or should be not integrated.
10. After the decision was made by the manager, the involved teacher must be obliged to accept it.
11. The teacher who is involved in the integration should be consulted before the decision will be taken.
12. The teachers that allow integrated children should be prepared and informed to handle the situation.
13. The teachers involved in the integration should have easy access to the files of integrated children.
14. I consider that in a school where integration is applied, there must exist sufficient specialists (psychologist, psychopedagogue, nurse, speech therapist, social worker, etc.) who can give support to teachers.
15. I consider that the specialization of teachers who are involved in the integration process is required.

16. In my opinion, the school that applies integration must have sufficient materials that are adapted to the learning activities necessities of pupils with special educational needs.
17. I believe that the existing planning in gymnasium school (lift, access ramp, room size) can allow an adequate integration for pupils with motor deficiencies.
18. I consider that after the integration decision has been made, the number of pupils in the class where he/she integrates must diminish.
19. The class that is receiving the child with adapting and learning difficulties must be prepared.
20. Preparing the class that integrates the child must be assumed by the teacher with the support of other specialists (psychologists, psychopedagogues, doctors).
21. In my opinion, some teachers meet difficulties involving in activities with children that require special educational needs.
22. I consider that it's hard to teach while the pupil with special educational needs is accompanied.
23. In my opinion, teacher who participate in the integration process are dealing with additional stress.
24. The presence of a pupil with special educational needs is useful for the other pupils because he/she raises awareness.
25. The post-planned integration may compromise the learning rhythm in a regular class.
26. The pupils' with special educational needs integration in a regular class guarantees their learning success.
27. The integration in regular classes may help pupils with special educational needs to correct certain aspects within their behaviour.
28. Pupils with severe mental disorders must be placed in a school with the same environment and not in regular classes.
29. I believe that it is better to prioritize the integration of children who are capable to reach academic progress.
30. Some children with special educational needs may reach a negative image about themselves if they are integrated.
31. The presence of a pupil with special educational needs in a regular class means additional work for the teachers involved in the integration process.
32. In general, children with special educational needs are well-welcomed in regular classes by the other pupils.
33. Usually, regular classes stimulate children with special educational needs.
34. I consider that pupils with behavioral disorders present the biggest integration problems.
35. I consider that is desirable to regroup children with behavioral disorders rather than integrating them in regular classes.
36. Integrated pupils that present mental or behavioral disorders may often register failures in regular classes.
37. The integration decision must not be influenced by the pressure parents of the child put in certain circumstances.

38. I consider that the whole truth must be told to the parents of the child that presents special educational needs.
39. I consider that the integration process of children who present deficiencies in a regular class is a necessity of the present society.
40. I consider that integration is a matter that regards the future, because the present shows a society that is not prepared for pursuing this option.
41. In my opinion, school offers the right framework for an optimal development of a child with special educational needs.
42. In my opinion, the right moment to integrate pupils with special educational needs must match the debut of their education.
43. I consider that the integration of children with special educational needs must be made later, in II-IV classes, after they had acquired a particular academic experience.
44. The presence of pupils with special educational needs in a regular class disturbs the quality of teaching activity in defavour of the endowed children.
45. In consider that, as far as integration is concerned, the activity of all children must be assured, including the one of children with special educational needs, in a proper rhythm, if the following conditions are respected:
 - reducing the number of children in a class (12-15)
 - individualizing and departing the instructive-educative process
46. I consider that deficient children must be focused in special classes in middle schools, where they should be provided with a itinerant teacher, a psychopedagogue, books and special programmes, and some activities (celebrations, competitions) that should be held with the other children.
47. In my opinion, children who followed primary school in special classes within a middle school must continue the gymnasial cycle in the same manner if proper conditions are fulfilled (specialists, psychopedagogues, books and special programmes).
48. I believe that only children who present motor, sensorial, mental or behavioural disorders on a minimum or medium level can be integrated; the ones with a serious deficiency must submit to special schools.

7. Conclusion

Following the submission and analysis of the questionnaires, it concludes that most of the teachers acknowledge the characteristic of children with special educational needs. However, the special needs and intervention methods in their education seem to be less known.

Most of the teachers would accept a SEN child in class only with the support of the itinerant teacher. Some teachers begin with prejudicing regarding these problems, considering that these children are unprepared, distracted, with reduced reception and understanding capacities regarding teacher's messages, which could disrupt the class order and diminish the performance of the class. The majority of them recognize the necessity to acknowledge information about SEN children, of the support of speciality staff and preparatory courses in the field of SEN children education. All the academic actors must guide

to a proactive attitude, meant to improve the inclusion process, to reach school and post-school positive results. The positive aspect is the fact that the teachers, as opinion makers, agree that SEN pupils must be differently evaluated, though the aspect that makes a difference is the intensity of this belief. The teachers are reluctant in this sense, probably considering the same source as the one agreeing with reorienting pupils through special education, considering that mass education must mean adapting to a certain school curriculum, respectively fulfilling competences and performance items which it gathers, however forgetting the learning purpose itself: the progress.

In this case I would propose organizing the following:

- an informative course with the attendance of speciality staff (in collaboration with the support teacher), aimed to remove stereotypes and prejudices regarding disabled persons, accepting them and not discriminate them, highlighting their values.

- a preparatory course aimed to ease the integration process of SEN children that will contain special teaching techniques, all well as social and school integration one.

- special meetings with the attendance of teachers and parents of SEN children focused on several topics such as: discrimination, improving the self-esteem of the child with SEN, education problems, behaviour problems, easy learning techniques.

- homeroom classes with the following topics: “Children with SEN”, organized for the pupils of the school by the homeroom teacher.

Emil Stan emphasizes the necessity to form pro inclusive competences of the teachers, taking into consideration that “tolerance in school must start with accepting the child as a legitimate knowledge centre, having its own intentions and interests, the latter sometimes being unacceptable for the adult”. Moreover, the same author highlights the children’s right to the theoretical landmarks and fundamentals “alterity to difference, meaning a certain condition, that must be accepted, recognised and respected” (Stan, 2007, p. 59).

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