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**THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN  
CLASSROOM**

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**Abstract**

The problem of learning difficulties is new and old in the same time. It is a fact that in classrooms there are more and more pupils experiencing this problem. In the same time, the teachers have a problem to adapt the curricula for this type of children, to make the class accept them, and the parents of the other pupils be partners in their education. Every year, in every classroom are a lot of problems because of children with learning disabilities, or because they are not accepted by the others. In the same time we think that a lot of teachers are not prepared for managing the classes where these children are included. The purpose of this paper is to find solutions for the management of the classroom where there are children with learning difficulties. For that we used a questionnaire that was applied to 120 primary teachers in Oradea and Bihor county. The results show that the teacher has a big role in the successful integration of children with learning difficulties.

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**Keywords:** Learning difficulties; management; classroom.

## 1. Introduction

One of the biggest problem of our days, from the perspective of a teacher is to manage as well as he can the classroom where he's working. In every class there are a variety of pupils, some of them with problems: learning disabilities, behavioural problems, etc. What can you do in this situations? How can you work with your students? Which are the solutions for a good management in your classroom?

## 2. Theoretical Aspects



According to the *Dictionary of Pedagogy* (Schaub, H., Zenke, K.,G., 2001, p.73), **learning difficulties** “are mainly visible in the field of efficiency. They are mostly connected to repeated failures and have undesired influences on personality development”. A more complex definition is given by Catalano, H., C., (2009, p.13): “Learning difficulties are obstacles within the learning process that affect the informational input, from both, cognitive and meta-cognitive perspectives, with persons that have a basic intellectual ability, complete from a structural and functional point of view. As opposed to mental deficiencies, learning difficulties are seen with children belonging to the field of “normality” – characterized by intelligence quotients situated at least at dullness or average rating scale”.

Vrășmaș E, (2007, p.9) underlines that there are several approaches to learning difficulties, as pointed out by the field bibliography, like:

- Learning problems of pupils that cannot keep the rhythm with their classmates, pupils that have problems in understanding and acquiring new knowledge and in skill development. These are **learning problems** triggered by an inadequate approach of learning. They are encountered by **certain children**, mainly because of the children themselves; during the teaching process, pupils should not have difficulties if they adequately get ready for class and interact during it. Teachers think the cause of these problems is the pupil’s lack of effort and interaction, also due to certain development characteristics of the child. These children can be encountered in every grade and have low academic performance, thus learning difficulties. Some of them are slow learners, a situation that should be of great concern for teachers, for those that deliver the act of teaching. Still, a successful learning is achieved only by the effort these children undertake and the way they get ready for school activities. Thus, according to this approach, the responsibility is mainly that of children.

- Difficulties/deficiencies/disabilities **of the learning process in itself**, which are specific to it, problems studied by special psycho-pedagogy. A new type of disability – disorder or development problem that can be registered is underlined/set. In fact, it is about acknowledging a new category of problems/disabilities, a category not set within those so far established: mental, sensorial, speech, communication, psycho-motor. Certain disorders – disabilities that concern the general process of learning are identified; they are difficulties that children encounter during the complex process of their development and that are visible at the level of their school and social adaptation, although they do not present other intellectual, motor or sensorial problems or disabilities. The field study of this approach refers to the general and specific mechanisms of learning. Certain difficulties/disorders concerning the learning process in its basic psycho-social components and dimensions are brought up. A separate field of problems which comprise a special variety of manifestations connected to the learning processes, both, individual and social, is underlined.

- **General difficulties** of the learning process can be encountered with any child, no matter his/her knowledge understanding and learning style, viewed from a perspective that brings all children together, not only those considered having deficiencies. This is a curricular approach and it constitutes a reconstruction of the field of intervention concepts, practices and methods that concerns the situations comprised in special education. It starts from understanding that any person can encounter learning difficulties at a certain point, in one or another stage of his/her development. But this should neither make us label or marginalize a person, nor set children in different categories. By accepting the idea that every child can learn and that learning is our way of adapting and developing, the construction of this field

reconsiders the social value of learning. Viewing the field of learning difficulties as a general (non-categorizing) field, the recognition, assessment and special intervention on learning problems as problems common to all children, including the acknowledgement of deficiencies, disabilities and/or incapacities as specific ways of learning, is conducted. Each of these is seen as a characteristic of the learning process as opposed of being considered a permanent state. The curricular approach focuses on the individual, on everyone's uniqueness, on life experience and support for learning by adequate methods and stimulating inter-relations. An efficient learning is the goal of every school activity; the accepted methods are interactive, while the child's deficiencies or incapacities are seen as disabilities, different ways of approaching learning. This approach values both, the process and the content of learning.

We consider that learning difficulties "are represented by disorders in the field of learning that prevent the pupil from achieving an academic performance similar to that of his/her peers (of the same age, and having the same intellectual level) without having any visible or acknowledgeable deficiency or disability. They can be caused by an underdevelopment or an incomplete development of certain simple instrumental functions, but also by a low self-esteem due to relationship issues with people around them." (Peter, K., 2014, p.34)

At present, the Romanian school talks more and more about the integration/inclusion of children with special educative needs, in general, with learning difficulties, in special. The role and tasks of a teacher are more and more diversified; he/she has to be better trained to find the best ways of ensuring a successful learning for every pupil. Thus, the teacher has to be a good class manager, to be able to always find solutions so that every child feels accepted and valued, and live positive feelings towards school and all its activities.

Because of this, the management of inclusive education is often talked about, "a branch of educational management that focuses on inclusive education, i.e. management of specialized educational services, necessary within the integration process of children with SEN, under the coordination of teachers, support teachers, school tutors, and as well as interdisciplinary teams." (Molnar, I., Răduț-Taciu, I., Chiș, O., Chiș, S., Ianc, P., 2015, p.159)

Because learning difficulties belong to the category of special educational needs, we believe that teachers should be thoroughly trained to be able to manager in the best way possible their class.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Goals:**

- Identifying the attitude of teachers towards children with SEN, in general, and towards children with learning difficulties, in special
- Identifying concrete and effective solutions for a better integration of children with learning difficulties in a regular class
- Identifying methods of "good practices" concerning the management of classes having integrated/included children with learning difficulties

#### **3.2. Research Hypothesis**

SH1: We assume that teachers' attitude towards the integration/inclusion of children with learning difficulties in their classes is continuously becoming more and more positive due to finding practical solutions for the management of these classes

H0: We assume that teachers' attitude towards the integration/inclusion of children with learning difficulties in their classes is due to hazard.

SH: We assume that teachers that have in their class pupils with learning difficulties find and make use of efficient solutions of management that can have the value of "good practices"

H0: We assume the class management solutions used by the teachers that have in their class pupils with learning difficulties are due to hazard

### 3.3. Subject Lot

The hereby study was conducted on a lot of 120 subjects, teachers in Oradea and Bihor County. Each subject has or had children with learning difficulties integrated in his/her class.

Important factors in our research are considered to be teaching experience and didactic degree, because they could influence the attitude towards these pupils. Thus, we present the following chart:

**Table 1.** Division of teachers according to teaching experience and didactic degree:

	No didactic degree	Beginner teacher	2 <sup>nd</sup> didactic degree	1 <sup>st</sup> didactic degree	Total
1-5 years	3	2	-	-	5
6-10 years	2	4	4	4	14
11-15 years	2	3	9	19	33
16-25 years	1	2	10	29	42
>25 years	-	-	6	20	26
Total	8	11	29	72	120

### 3.4. Research Methods

For the hereby study, a statistical one, we used a 32-item questionnaire designed by ourselves; its items refer to:

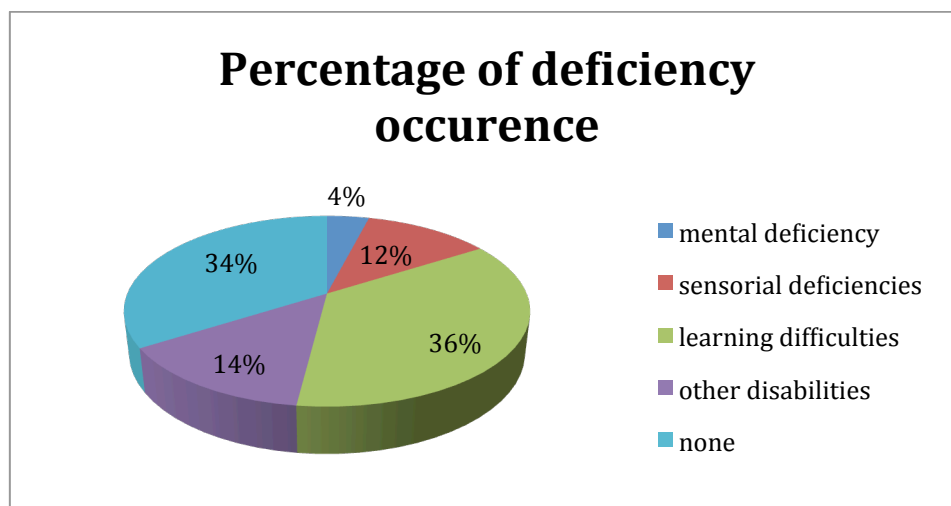
- Facts and information about the subject (age, teaching experience, didactic degree, social background, graduated studies)
- Facts concerning the knowledge the subject has about children with SEN
- Subject's attitude towards children with SEN and towards their integration
- Concrete ways of class management for a better integration of these children

## 4. Interpretation and Analysis of Research Data

The results of the questionnaire conducted on a number of 120 teachers in Oradea and Bihor County are relevant for our research. Thus, hypothesis no.1: **We assume that teachers' attitude towards the integration/inclusion of children with learning difficulties in their classes is continuously**

becoming more and more positive due to finding practical solutions for the management of these classes, is validated by research data.

Research data point out that most teachers have in their grades children with various categories of disabilities, among which learning difficulties, as presented in the following chart:



**Figure 1.** Percentage of the occurrence of various categories of disabilities within the grades of subject teachers

The chart points out that teachers are mostly dealing with children with learning difficulties (36%), but there are also children with mental, sensorial or neuromotor deficiencies. There is a high percentage (34%) of teachers who stated they do not have in their grades children with disabilities. We were interested in understanding how the integration of these children is implemented, which are the ways by which teachers succeed in managing these grades; the table below shows the answers of the questionnaire item focusing on this topic:

**Table 2.** Types of disabilities and a successful integration

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Mental, sensorial, neuromotor (and others) disabilities	3%	7,5%	35,5%	30,8%	12,5%
Learning difficulties	0	0	64,5%	69,2%	87,5%

There is evidence that children with learning difficulties are integrated much easier, thus they achieve a better academic performance. This is possible because it is a less serious problem which can be prevented if the teacher notices it early enough.

Teachers mentioned concrete ways of achieving a successful integration/inclusion of children with learning difficulties, like:

- individualized instruction (learning)
- joint activity with the other children in the class
- joint games with the other children, especially role plays

- family involvement in the child's school life
- good communication and cooperation in class
- extra work, both, in school and at home
- involving the other children in the learning process of this child

**Table 3.** Comparing frequencies for a successful integration

Chi-Square	df	p
15.93	4	.003

When discussing about a successful integration, there is a threshold lower than 0.05 which points out there are significant differences between the subjects with learning difficulties and those belonging to the other categories of disabilities.

Research data validate our hypothesis, underlining that teachers' attitude is continuously becoming more and more positive.

#### **4. Discussions**

The results of this study are part of a more complex research, which would be followed by a printed volume with examples of "good practices", models for managing classes with children with learning difficulties. This is an important aspect because these children are experiencing a harsh school reality: although they need additional support, and even a support teacher, Romanian school system does not have the necessary funds to pay for these services. So, the class teacher is the only one that can help them. The teacher has to personally adapt the curriculum and perform an individualized instruction with them. Most of the times teachers manage to achieve it, but they simultaneously have to work with a large class (aprox. 25 children) that cannot be neglected. Thus, the teacher has to be a good time manager, a good class manager and to also be ready to work hard and give a lot of love to the little and unique personalities in their care, the adults of tomorrow.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The hereby study intended to demonstrate an important aspect of the teaching process: the management of classes having integrated children with learning difficulties. This is a statistical study that intended to understand the attitude of those involved in the teaching process of these pupils, a fact demonstrated by the research data partially presented here. Our research hypothesis was validated, while underlining the existence of significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards children with learning difficulties and those belonging to other categories of disabilities. The solutions they gave are efficient and can have the value of "good practices", effective tools for others, too. As further actions, we are thinking of organizing teacher trainings which should help teachers making their job easier.

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