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**SOCIAL COMPETENCE AND SELF-IDENTITY IN CHILDREN
WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT**
Literature Review

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Abstract

This research seeks to examine teachers' perceptions of social and academic competence and the perception of self-identity of children with hearing impairments, who study in a special class compared to those who are included in a regular class. The inclusion of children with special needs, in this case Hearing impaired children (HIC), is not an easy process, and this is undoubtedly a central issue regarding the educational and social aspects of their life. This article will argue that there is a difference in the development of the social and academic competence and the perception of HIC identity between a regular classroom versus a special one. The inclusion of HIC in regular classrooms offers them better chances to socially integrate and become more involved in the hearing population, both in the present and the future. Nevertheless, this integration does not eventually lead to an optimum one. Those pupils are more exposed to a wide range of emotional experiences as a result of difficulties in communications which limit their participation in class discussions and impact their learning process. This article will review previous research on the development of social competence and self-identity in HIC.

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Keywords: Hearing impaired children (HIC), integration, social competence.



1. Introduction

Deafness and hearing disabilities are caused by genetic factors or by pregnancy related, childbirth, or abnormal postnatal development: viral and bacterial diseases, traumas and medications (Wiesel & Zandberg, 2002). The definition of hearing impairment is damage to the ability to hear sounds partially or fully. The characterization of a hearing impairment and level of its severity are expressed in the intensity one requires to hear different sounds that his/her ears can absorb and to which he/she can respond. Hearing impaired children's social and academic competence is the ability to meet social demands and the ability to perform learning tasks (Mussen, Kunger, Kagan, & Heston, 1998). The concept of developing self-identity refers to an individual's ability to define his/her identity and connect himself/herself to society and society's ability to connect to an individual (Epstein, 2002).

The importance of the research is in the examination of teachers' perspectives regarding the process children experience in their peer group. The research will examine the way in which, according to teachers, hard of hearing pupils cope with their disability and with other pupils and school staff and the relationship between developing a self-identity and inclusion in a special or a regular class.

2. Main Body

2.1. Social competence and self-identity in children with hearing impairment

2.1.1. Social competence and self-identity

Josselson (1994) defined identity as the crossroads between an individual and society. In the definition of identity, an individual simultaneously links self to society, and society to self. This structure includes many constructs that are influenced by gender, age, ethnicity, religion, profession, as well as one's state of hearing. The clearest definition of identity is by contrasts, e.g. hearing vs. hard of hearing (Epstein, 2002).

2.1.2. Hearing Impairments –Implications for Pupils' Development in Elementary School

There have always been children with special needs, different in external appearance or behavior to other people, but their needs have not always been addressed. The researchers Hallahan and Kauffman (1988) argued that the attitude to children with different needs throughout history was different starting with the cruel approach which denied their right to exist to the humanitarian approach of understanding, acceptance, education and integration into regular society. From primitive tribal society to 500 B.C.E., the aim was survival and staying alive and therefore any difference threatened the actual existence of individuals and groups, and therefore, any child with different needs could not survive. In the middle ages, superstitious beliefs were widespread. Unusual appearance or behavior were considered the devil's power and supernatural or as a curse and punishment. For example, in this period, people believed in 'changelings' in other words babies with different needs were actually the children of the devil. Therefore, one had to do everything possible to exchange them with true children and if not, then destroy them (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988). The historical roots of special education are found at the beginning of the 19th century developed by European doctors and educators, which led to reform and special reference to children with disabilities. In the 20th century, massive progress was made in all areas of science and humanities and ways and means were developed to treat the injuries and disabilities of

children and adults. This century was characterized by enormous progress in all areas of science, technology, medicine, research and the like. Nevertheless, this century is characterized by two world wars that led to a large number of disabled in the world and therefore, paradoxically, to the development of tools, means and methods to treat and rehabilitate disability. Although there has been a process of development throughout human history, its intensity has differed in various periods, influenced by economic, social, religious and other processes. For example, during the period of the Nazi regime, attitudes towards the disabled and mentally ill worsened and they were put to death under government orders, and humanity in this period to a step backwards towards the primitive era (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988).

2.1.3. Hearing Impairments and Education Systems in the World and in Israel

In the last decade and currently, there has been a substantial increase in the number of children in Israel receiving special education services. Policy in the country today tends to include children with different needs in regular schools similarly to widespread policy in other countries especially the United States and Europe. In 1975, a law was passed in the U.S. compelling the integration of children with impairments, irrespective of their severity, into regular education frameworks. In Israel, in 1988, the Special Education Law was passed, overlapping with American law and emphasizing that in considerations regarding the placement of children with different needs, first preference should be given to regular education frameworks. The policy of integration was formulated at the same time as changes in the definition of children with different needs and the definition of special education in Israel. With the establishment of the state and until the mid-1970s, categorization of children was accepted. According to this definition, children were ascribed to groups of education and therapy according to their dominant impairment: intellectual, mental, physical, and behavioral. Types of impairment determined the nature of care. The ruling approach was that when considering the good of an individual child, one must adapt an integration program for the individual. They should be provided with a framework that will allow them to develop their skills and function optimally in the present and future (Ronen, 1997). How much more so, with the integration of pupils with a hearing impairment.

In the past, hearing impaired pupils were integrated into regular schools and were forced to cope with assignment without real personal adaptations like all regular pupils, therefore mainly children who were able to read lips and had high communication and language abilities were integrated. Over the years pupils with various impairments were also integrated, which led to a change in the view of assistance hearing impaired pupils needed and led to the regular education system introducing change and building programs including education for hearing impaired (Plaut, 2007).

2.1.4. Inclusion of hearing impaired children

Hearing loss has a crucial influence on a child's development. The severer the disability, the greater the difficulty in absorbing language. This difficulty in language acquisition affects the ability of the hard of hearing children to establish social ties, which is accompanied by emotional difficulties (Eliyahu, 2007). Language, which is a basic tool for creating interpersonal and social relations, creates social and emotional difficulties for the hard of hearing children (Katz & Schery, 2006).

Several hearing loss aspects are expressed in learning difficulties at school. The common perception is that hard of hearing children, have the same basic cognitive abilities as hearing children. However, they experience difficulties or a delay in specific cognitive functions, where the possible explanation for the difference in their information processing is environmental rather than organic (Stinson & Whitmire, 2000). Auditory deprivation causes communication and language problems as well as a reduced number of experiences and suitable opportunities for learning. Unlike their hearing peers, they cannot afford to be partly distracted from the subject being taught in part, because they cannot supplement the missing information using all their senses. Various rehabilitation options are available, and in recent years, rehabilitation is carried out through cochlear implant surgery, performed in young children, to prevent, to the extent possible, the formation of gaps in language development (Pisoni, 2000). The family of a child with a hearing loss constitutes a central and crucial factor in facilitating adjustment and coping. The way in which parents accept their hard of hearing child has an impact on his/her accepting and coping with the disability in a healthy way that will enable personal and social growth, whether he/she is included in a regular class or is enrolled in a special one (Levinger, 2003).

The concept of inclusion emerged from lobbying for access to education at the end of the previous century (Kirby, 2017). Mandatory Inclusion in Israel is based on three guiding principals:

- 1) accompanying services determined by pupils' needs
- 2) placement within the least restrictive environment
- 3) organizational flexibility in providing accompanying services (Avissar, 2012).

Antia, Jones, Luckner, Kreimeyer, and Reed (2011) found that including hard of hearing children in regular classes gives them a better chance to integrate and be involved in a hearing society. This inclusion allows for early integration into a hearing society, creates better communication with the hearing pupils and allows for better access to auditory information. Including hard of hearing children in regular classes has great influence on them and helps positive social results, and as such, it generates better academic results. Nevertheless, a study by Angelides and Aravi (2007) revealed that hard of hearing children that are included in regular education develop their speaking skills and academic learning goals in a better way than those in special education frameworks, because they have more opportunities to learn spoken language. Despite improvements in academic skills, it was found that attending a regular education framework does not lead to their social integration because of communication difficulties that limit their participation in class discussions. Hence, hard of hearing children who are included in regular educational frameworks are more exposed to various emotional experiences that influence their learning processes (Eichengreen & Hoofien, 2009).

2.1.5. Social competence and self-identity

Hearing impairment children experience difficulties in acquiring skills and abilities to develop language, difficulties in producing spoken language and difficulty in maintaining verbal communication with their environment. This influences their overall areas of emotional, social, cognitive and academic development (Ingbar, Anshen, Ben Yehuda, Michaeli, & Eden, 2008). Furthermore, difficulties in communication and exceptionally unclear articulation, which often arouse ridicule or rejection on the part

of other children (Eichengreen & Hoofien, 2009). These emotional experiences and learning difficulties at school led those who engage in inclusion to give attention to the issue of how to include hard of hearing pupils in educational frameworks that will provide for their need, while coping with their need to preserve their different self-identity.

3. Methodology

A systematic review of the relevant literature was done.

4. Conclusion

Hearing impairment people regard themselves as a community with its own language, culture and norms. Hearing impairment people who do not feel they belong to the world of either hearing or deaf world, constitute a group of bi-cultural identity, meaning, they are part of two (or more) cultural environments. Including hard of hearing pupils in regular classes does not necessarily get them closer to hearing children. The former often feel the need to preserve their unique self-identity, and thus prefer special schools (Epstein, 2002). Placing these pupils in integrative classes is one of the ways the education system attempts to include children with different needs in special and regular classes in regular schools and still cater to their special needs (Gorni, 2001). The Special Education Law, enacted in 1988, received a different meaning and led to significant change. The law gave the special needs population the possibility of integrating into regular classes (Reiter, 2004). Before this law was passed, the population of children with special needs, was imprisoned by a system unable to understand their needs, which constituted a huge obstacle and difficulty for educational teams who worked with this population. To guarantee successful inclusion of hard of hearing pupils in a regular educational framework, it is important to emphasize all aspects of inclusion and support pupils according to their needs in every aspect, not only academic, but also guidance and training in the communication-social area. If all participants do their job properly, the chances of inclusion to succeed are very high (Most, 2007).

The uniqueness and importance of the proposed research is in the examination of teachers' perspectives with regard to the process children experience in their peer group. The research will examine the way in which, according to teachers, hard of hearing pupils cope with their disability and with other pupils and school staff and the relationship between developing a self-identity and inclusion in a special or a regular class.

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