Chapter 15

Learning to Teach Students With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Training Experiences for Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The presence of special needs students in regular classrooms makes it difficult for teachers to manage the situation, especially since in Romania the initial teacher-training curriculum doesn’t include a class addressing the issue. This chapter talks about the teaching, learning, and evaluation experiences offered by an instructional unit on the subject of ADHD for over 700 primary and secondary school teachers from all areas of expertise. The purpose of this unit was to increase the teachers’ knowledge and understanding of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in an educational frame. This chapter presents content elements, learning, and assessment activities that the participants proposed and implemented during the work sessions: both face to face and online. The authors mention that this training experience was part of a larger project called “e-Mentor: Developing ITC Skills and Educational Mentor-ship of Disabled Persons, for Teachers” implemented by “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu.

INTRODUCTION

A major challenge that teachers face in the 21st century is the diversity of students in classrooms. Like many other countries, Romania is working towards an inclusive education. Within this context, meeting the needs of diverse students within their classroom is a requirement teachers have to consider, using their management and pedagogic skills. In Romania there still are special schools, but many of the children with special needs attend regular school. The presence of special-needs students in regular classrooms makes it difficult for teachers to manage the situation, especially since in Romania the initial teacher-training curriculum does not include a class addressing the issue. Many teachers experience difficult teaching
Learning to Teach Students With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

situations with too many pupils in the class and a shortage of special education knowledge (Brodin, 2012). More knowledge of special education in teacher education is needed. Thus, it is very important that teachers’ continuous training is oriented toward this direction. Teachers have to be trained in order to manage students with special needs in the general education classroom. Developing the teachers’ skills in order to design, create, and assess didactic activities that are appropriate for students with disabilities, while also integrating them in regular classrooms, is more than welcomed.

Facing this reality, the “Lucian Blaga” University in Sibiu, in collaboration with the “Dunarea de jos” University in Galati, implemented in 2014-2015 a project called: “e-Mentor: Developing ITC skills and educational mentor-ship of disabled persons, for teachers”. The project’s objective was to increase the level of ITC (Information Technology and Communications) skills in teachers, to explore new interactive learning methods, and to improve working with disabled persons; these methods were to be used extensively in teaching, thus improving the results of the educational process and increasing the access to education for disabled persons.

The project’s beneficiaries were a target group of 1,400 teachers from pre-university education, from all areas of expertise. The program contained two modules: a. The module for Educational Mentor-ship of Disabled Persons (EMDP) and b. the module for ITC and e-learning. Each module lasted 48 hours, of which 16 hours were dedicated to online training. The EMDP module was composed of seven content units: a. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), b. autism, c. sensory deficiencies (sight, hearing), d. mental deficiencies, e. learning difficulties, f. language disorders, and g. physical deficiencies.

This chapter talks about the teaching, learning, and evaluation experiences offered by the unit on ADHD (it was set for 5 hours of direct teaching and 3 hours of online learning) for over 700 primary and secondary school teachers. The purpose of this unit was to increase the teachers’ knowledge and understanding of students with ADHD in educational settings.

BACKGROUND

Affecting three to five percent of the population, ADHD is one of the most common neuro-behavioral disorders in childhood, which can also persist into adult life. ADHD is described as a “persistent” or ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development. ADHD affects the individual’s capacity to focus on work tasks (distraction), to control the level of activity (hyper-active behavior), and to inhibit impulsive behavior (impulsiveness).

ADHD is a disorder of self-control development that interferes with normal development and affects all aspects of the person’s social life, including family relationships, at school, and at play. The dysfunction that causes ADHD is believed to be due to an imbalance of chemical neurotransmitters in the brain. This imbalance is found especially in those parts of the brain that are responsible for self-monitoring and defeating inappropriate behaviors, that is, in the frontal lobes area (Green & Chee, 2009). Most current models of ADHD emphasize the deficiencies in the executive function skills of behavioral inhibition and self-regulation (Barkley, 2006).

ADHD begins in childhood and may persist into adulthood. The incidence of cases is higher for males. The rate of boys diagnosed with ADHD is at least three times higher than for girls. One reason why girls have a lower frequency of ADHD is because they are rarely diagnosed. Boys with ADHD exhibit executive deficiencies, hyperactivity, aggression, and antisocial behaviors more often than girls,