Chapter 8

Teacher Attitudes Towards the School Integration of Students With Special Educational Needs

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the issue of integrating students with SEN in mainstream education has been the focus of both educationalists and teachers from Romania. In this respect, integrated education means the form of schooling in which students with SEN are taught in mainstream education, while inclusive education assumes that schools adjust themselves to the psycho-individual particularities of each student, whether or not they have certain disabilities. Unfortunately, teachers and other educational agents are not always prepared to accept and meet the needs of a student with disabilities. Thus, the aim of this research was to identify the attitude of teachers towards the integration of students with SEN in the mainstream education of Bihor county, Romania. The results show that both society and a large part of the school staff ignore the issue of people with disabilities, preferring a superficial involvement, which restricts itself mainly to the administrative aspect instead of developing quality interpersonal relationships between non-disabled students and those with SEN.
INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of the world we live in, which is, inevitably, accompanied by increased expectations for a more active and responsible participation of all citizens, has led to more and more extensive studies on the objective and subjective limits of contemporary education and on the prospects of its evolution. Thus, in recent decades significant progress has been made on the protection and enforcement of children’s rights, of the right to education, in particular. There is a general approach to the importance of education and to the provision of access to education for all children, as a way of accomplishing other fundamental human rights and as a means of modeling the future development of mankind. This consensus has been translated into specific actions that have generated extensive processes, which have helped the bringing of millions of formerly rejected and excluded children into the world of education (Blândul & Bradea, 2017).

Contemporary society - be it Romania or the rest of the world - is undergoing a series of transformations, with a profound and permanent character. We can mention the transformations from an economic, social, cultural, demographic point of view, which, in time, can influence the evolution of individuals’ mentality. One of the best examples in this regard is the shift from the predominantly isolationist policy of some countries to the one favourable to globalization, based on competition - on the one hand, on tolerance and respect - on the other. As a pillar in the development of society, education should be a good practice model in terms of globalization, promoting cooperation, fair play, respect, tolerance towards the needs of others, acceptance of diversity, etc. The field with the most powerful visual and emotional impact in which such values become fundamental seems to be that of special education. This statement is supported by the fact that, beyond the specific intervention strategies for the recovery and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, special education should promote the integrationist philosophy, according to which the school and social environment must respond to the educational needs of these people, giving them the opportunity to express themselves to their true value. Starting with the Salamanca Declaration in June 1994, many schools have tried to adapt their infrastructure and curricular offer to the educational needs of all their students, whether or not they are diagnosed with a certain type of disability. Thus, resulted in the so-called “inclusive schools,” where tolerance and mutual acceptance should be the values to indicate the organization’s action directions.

The education of children with special needs should focus on providing support in order to reach that individual level of development which is as close as possible to normal by gaining the required experiences in school and in the social environment, by developing the abilities required for learning, by acquiring the knowledge and skills useful for the socio-professional integration and which create the conditions for
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