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Fostering a Developmental Educational and Creative Environment for Children with Special Educational Needs in the Bulgarian Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Theoretical and methodological grounds for topic research: An important skill for a successful and fulfilling life is the ability for adaptive and positive behavior, which enables people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life as defined by World Health Organization. In particular, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy and sustainable relationships, show empathy to others, lead a healthy and effective way of life, etc. Life skills contribute to personal actions and relationships with others, as well as to actions that aim to change the environment in a way that is beneficial to people’s health.

Research area: This publication analyses options to alleviate the state of distress present both in children with special needs as well as in their parents since it is the parents, who, together with educators, work in synergy for a common cause – the effective development and improvement of a child’s autonomy. The practical dimension is related to the search for a coherent link in the application of creativity as a formative and personality-developing process with a sustainable trend towards adaptation, socialization, and a fulfilling way of life for the persons/children with special educational needs.

Objectives, methods, results, conclusions, and recommendations: For the topic, a small-scale study with parents of children with disabilities was carried out to find out the main problems related to their children’s socialization and learning process, to highlight them and work towards their solution. From a more global perspective, the question of procedural modeling is also addressed to influence positively the overall health of children with special educational needs, their full integration, as far as it is possible, which should contribute to their happiness and ultimately, the prosperity of the community. Process modeling as an activity usually implies the need to change the process or to identify problems to be corrected. This transformation can be realized in different ways including the use of information and communication technologies and resources (ICTS) as necessary to modify the process. Change management programs, techniques or models are desirable, as they will contribute to the successful application of the processes in practice.

Keywords: inclusive education, procedural modeling, developing educational and creative environment, resources.

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Introduction

In Bulgaria, standardization and definition of children with special educational needs are structured in the Standard on Inclusive Education (Comprehensive Education Standard, 2018). Of course, the regulatory framework is not as of now in the previous years, there are basic provisions, instructions, etc. Enormous progress, effort, desire, and effective results are visible, but there is always more to be desired and done in this direction. For example, as new technologies advance, the vision of models becomes fully feasible, moving closer to daily reality. "Learning environments properly created and based on new technologies provide learners with more opportunities than traditional content training, pace, preparation and review of prerequisites, and actions such as teamwork, consultation, testing, and evaluation." (Voinohovska, 2012, p. 21).

Purpose and objectives of the study

The developmental functions of the game interaction in the formation and development of the child are following the activity approach (applied following the strategic goal), considering the age characteristics. Given the free expression and formation of plastic imagery skills, it is appropriate for children to be offered a specific play situation, directing them to specific images and actions. The game situation should be close, familiar so that they can draw the necessary actions from their experience. Their focus should be on expressing their mood and status (their own or that of the characters) with active activity. At this age level, an important stage in the development of thinking is also related to mastering a child's speech.

Literature review

At the heart of correctional and pedagogical work with children with developmental disabilities is a fundamental paradigm in psychology for the genetic linkage of different forms of thinking. At preschool age, the three basic forms interact closely (expressed in a spiral sequence of genetic development): visual-action, visual-figurative, and verbal-logical thinking. The given forms model this unified cognitive process of the real world, in which one or the other can prevail, and in this connection in the cognitive process, the

picture for the world becomes specific. In doing so, we must remember and keep in mind that thinking develops in conscious and meaningful, focused subject activity.

The procedural modeling has always been a key aspect of the interaction of processes, methods, and approaches for continuous improvement, development, and improvement. Activity modeling (predominantly by the professional teacher) affects the processes of learning, upbringing, and development (physical, mental, emotional, etc.). Here we refer to the publications of Giurova and Zeleeva (2017), Valeeva, Kalimullin, & Stoyanova (2011), which leads to the comprehensiveness of the architecture of human individuality with a steady trend towards personal improvement. Process capabilities in the context of other functional systems, data, structures, strategies, and more. create greater opportunities for analyzing and planning change. In this aspect, Dineva (2012, p. 293) wrote: "A useful and pragmatic approach in individual, group and family format is Decision-Focused Short Therapy, which is applicable in various social fields and is applicable in many situations due to its independence from problematic definitions. The startling facts are the conversations, which are purposeful language-adaptive games that are geared towards personalized solutions in specific situations."

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Methodology

The choice of an adequate methodology is the result of aligning theoretical considerations with the objective. As well as urgent resource support for teachers in kindergarten who, in the absence of a specific methodology and training to work on with children with SENs go astray because they presumably accept the problem as a personal mission. As Petkova (2012, pp. 214-215) says: "... Those who are dedicated to the profession still carry the Revival fire and spirit and seek ways to motivate themselves and their students in mastering new knowledge, skills, and competences."

Experimental base of the study. The use of a developed system of pedagogical game situations for the development of the mental activity in children with deviations from the norm of development will allow them to form in them a correlation, a relation, between the main components of knowledge: action, word, and image with the involvement of the perceptual processes - feeling and perception. They are generated through the sensory organs - sight, hearing, touch, smell, etc. Thanks to them, the person (the child)

discovers the panorama in the surrounding world with all its magnificence of phenomena and qualities - sounds, smells, tastes, colors, forms, and temperature peculiarities. Through the sensation that allows us to determine some of the properties of objects, the next cognitive process emerges – the perception that integrates the individual senses into a whole image and proceeds as a process of seeking an answer to the question "What is this?". Perception is central to pre-school cognitive processes. Its formation ensures and guarantees the successful accumulation of new knowledge, the speed at assimilation of new information, the adaptation to a new environment, the full physical and mental development.

For this topic, we have done extensive research, but due to the limited volume of the publication, we will present a very small portion of it.

The purpose of the survey is to determine the opinion of:

- Non-standard developmental children/students about existing problems, their full socialization, and integration into society.
- Parents of children with developmental disabilities about integration problems, as well as suggestions on how to address them.
- Teachers co-teaching children/students with atypical development in a child group/class.

Target groups:

- Children with special needs.
- Parents of children with atypical development.
- Teachers in kindergartens and schools.

Results

Identification and analysis of results. Exposure and analysis of results.

To the children and students, one of the questions asked is, "Do you feel good about kindergarten/school?" The answers are divided separately for children, separately for students. Here, in Figure 1, we present them in a unified, percentage format.

Of all the children surveyed, 49% said 'Yes'. 38% say 'No'. The hesitation of "I don't know, I can't answer" is 13%.

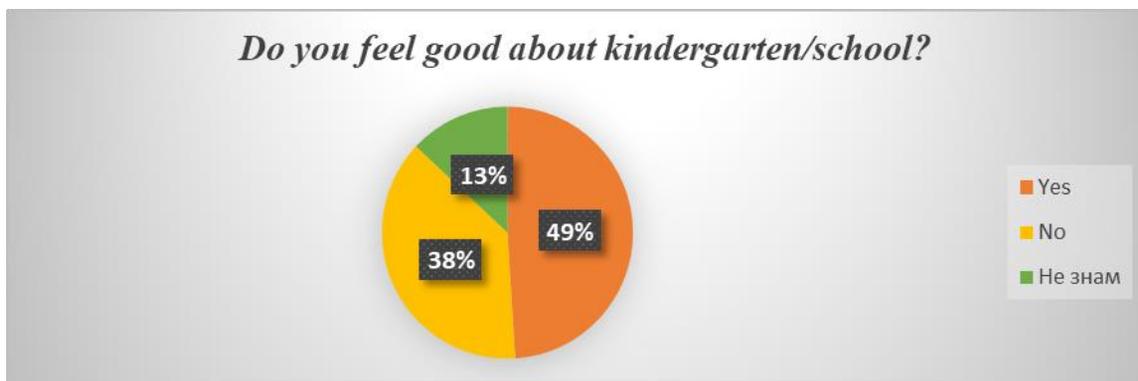


Figure 1. Percentage of an answer to the first question "Do you feel good about kindergarten/school?"

This question and the answers in it give us an idea of the feelings of the child/student he or she experiences when placed in an environment with comrades without problems in their development. How does it feel among them? Almost half say they are nice, which means they feel accepted. The percentage of children who responded that they were not feeling well was very high. The difference between satisfied and dissatisfied is not large. The children and students who gave an evasive answer "I don't know" are as pleased as they are, but rather tend to be dissatisfied. These results do not show sufficient joy in children with special needs attending a nursery or school.

The next question "Should there be children with special educational needs into the mainstream group/class?" was asked of teachers in kindergartens and schools. Here we were looking for an answer to the resistance or desire of the Teachers College to work with what kind of children.

In percentage terms, the following results are presented in Figure 2: A relatively high percentage (57%) of the teachers agree that there is a child/student with atypical development in their group/class. 27% say "No" and 16% hesitate to "Don't know."

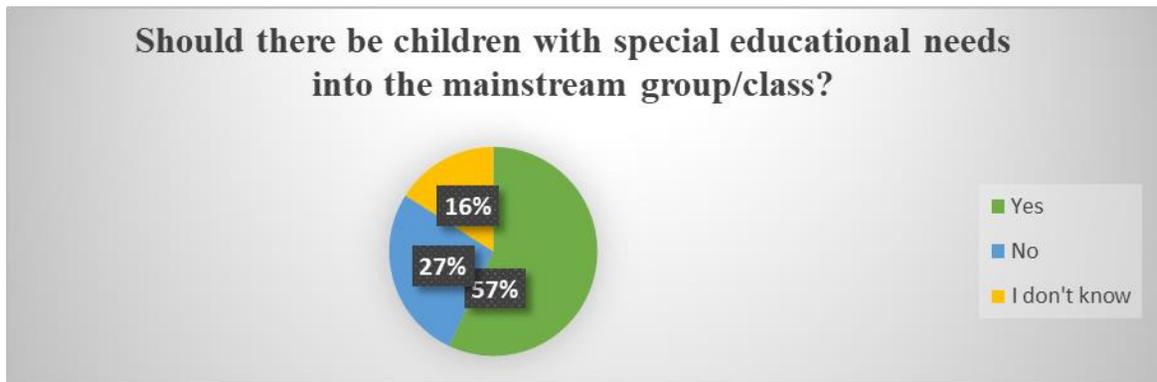


Figure 2. Teachers' opinion on working with a child with SEN in a child group or a classroom at school

Almost half of the respondents said yes, which means they are not afraid and worried about working with children/students with problems. There is no small percentage of teachers who strongly reject the idea in their group/class to teach a child with special needs. The hesitant, those who do not know how to answer are not below ten percent, which can mean many things - they are not confident in their competencies, they do not find support in the face of management or parents, and many other reasons.

And the last group of questions presented here is to parents: "Are you calm when your child is in kindergarten/school?" With this question (the results presented in Figure 3) we wanted to find out how much the parents trust in the schools - kindergarten and school.

Parents of respondents 85% answered positively "Yes". The answer "No" was given by 8%. "I do not know" only 7% of them.



Figure 3. Differentiate answers as a percentage of the question "Are you calm when your child is in kindergarten/school?"

A very high percentage of parents responded positively, meaning that they believe in academic institutions. They are trusted, they are calm about their children. They trust the management, teachers, and support staff. It can be said that the percentage of those who are not calm is not satisfied and those who hesitate do not know what answer to give is the same. They are below 20%, which strongly confirms the opinion in absolute confidence in school institutions.

Discussions

The concept of inclusive education is a comprehensive process that includes the so-called. "Community-based rehabilitation", which means: Inclusion of children with special needs in community activities, inside and outside the school, with other children; inclusion of community resources (according to the Salamanca Declaration, mainstream schools must accept all children with special educational needs).

Article 6 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria states: All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Parents, adults, teachers need to know and know their rights to assert them. The topic of children's rights and obligations is being studied at pre-school, in the kindergarten: "... human rights are important from the perspective of the educator and in particular the social pedagogue. The main theoretical questions are the place of the child in the context of the law and its relation to morality, society, international guarantees for man." (Kolarova, 2004)

In general, pedagogical methods and methods of training have a specific application, following the educational needs of children and the specificity of corrective work with them. In our deep conviction,

further effective schooling needs to lay down and realize the full foundation of visual-action and visual-thinking. Because: “Beginning with the development of the visual-action and continuing the formation of the visual-thinking, the teacher creates the conditions for the formation of the imagination, i.e. the child has the opportunity to mentally reproduce the visual situation based on the word. Bearing in mind that many school subjects are subject to verbal narrative and the verbal description of the teacher.” (Strebeleva, 2005, p. 156).

Formation of visual-active thinking. Visual-active thinking develops starting the first stage of the overall thought process. It manifests itself at an early age. When choosing methods and techniques for forming this type of thinking in children with SEN, we must start from the fact that in the thinking is accompanied in harmony with the different types of activities - subject, game, communication related to verbal expression.

Formation of visual-figurative thinking. Here, the first training section is to form an overall perception of the situation depicted in the pictures, the first series of tasks aiming at a smooth transition from visual-action to visual-thinking.

Formation of elements of abstract (verbal) logical thinking. The third way to reflect reality is through concepts.

The practical and theoretical activities of man have manifested all three ways of forming thinking. The dominance of one of them it depends on the age, preparation, attitude, the type of task. There are all the genetic and didactic prerequisites for the development of all three types of thinking. Their unity in the process of formation helps to solve the various problems that theory and practice set before man.

Conclusion

Education and upbringing without stigma and prejudice. Lifelong learning, to which Koleva (2011, pp. 65-66) states: “Lifelong learning integrates all activities (formal and informal) that develop an individual's personality to stimulate their knowledge and competences. In a market economy, the macro environment of the educational institution's development changes significantly. This requires every kindergarten and school to strive to impose its image, its specific system of education, and the desire to introduce new one's psychological approaches.”

In the present, we are talking (Neminska, 2018; Raheem & Yaseen, 2019; Alexandrache, 2014) already for the Management of a developing educational and creative environment, which includes not only management but before that clear, specific, structured planning, management of activities and resources,

monitoring of quality, imperativeness and rigor in the application of methods, forms, models, etc. on the activities for the realization of the goals and objectives, concerning inclusive education in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Each individual, especially a child, should be selected and given what is necessary, according to his special needs to "subdue it their peaks."

Up to now, it can be said that the creative approach to the development of an educational and creative environment for children with special educational needs is fundamental for their adaptation and socialization, for their full and independent way of life. With the development of modern technologies and the transition of human civilization to the information society, the problem of adaptive capacities of the individual is becoming more relevant. Adaptation of the person to the requirements of the social environment, his/her experience as a professional and successful, identified with the group, with the organization experiencing serious pressure from internal and external factors are present. (Al-Obaydi, 2019; Tahira, 2020).

All activity has consolidating functions (Doncheva, 2014) in terms of growth (such as development and progress), progress, evolution, and growth of the child. But here we are still talking about ordinary education for unusual children.

Many years of research show the corrective importance of the chosen path in the education of children with problems, the positive development in their thinking activities, the development of their personal qualities, and, in fact, their personal and effective socialization, for a dignified and independent way of life.

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