

WORK WITH KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

(Professional paper)

Sandra Milanović and Zivorad Marković

University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences, Jagodina, Serbia

Abstract

The integration of children with special needs includes education of those children together with the ones that do not have similar difficulties. Actually, children with special needs have to be provided the same possibilities for education, development and joining social life, as well as getting social status, in spite of their difficulties and restrictions. The purpose of this is to show the work of students at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina collaborating with the "October 17th" elementary school in voluntary work with children with special needs in Physical education classes. The students worked with the children with special needs during one school year. The research was realized during 2011/2012 school year through the sport section that included various content for the children with special needs, first to eight grade of elementary school, and the purpose was the same for all: to affirm motor skills and feeling of appurtenance, and develop the group spirit. During this period, the children with special needs came along so well that they even took part in the sport's competitions and public events together with their age group at the end of the school year. Applying this way of professional practice, we also prepared the students – future teachers, for different professional roles and substantive practical work during their future career.

Keywords: *professional practice, education, social status, physical education, sports competitions, physical development, intellectual development, emotional development, social development, sensor disorders, physical disorders, body disorders, students, sports section*

INTRODUCTION

Children with special needs are those who do not fit in the standard behavior models and show certain difficulties in dealing with educative and pedagogic tasks. The child with a problem becomes a problem itself, and if adequate ways of overcoming them are not found, it will be left alone to fight with the problem, and also with the surrounding that often, burdened with prejudices, excludes those children. The problem can be their condition that breaks the continuity of individual and group work. The most common problems that teachers face with are their relationship with other people, emotional conflicts, problems in studying and school acquirements. Problems caused by organic and functional disorders, or by absence of an organ or part of an organ, can cause even more complicated consequents on all aspects of personal development, and they need a complex support not only from their family and teachers, but also from various experts. The children with special needs need special social support in order to have accomplishments and keep an agreeable level of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. This includes a wide category of children with physical, mental and sensor disorder, but also children with behavioral disturbance, children with heavy ailments, children put on continuous or house treatment, children from culturally or socially deprived environment.

Those are children that have sensor, physical and body disorders, development issues (development difficulties, impeded children), or children of marginalized groups members.

Defining children with special needs

In professional circles, a child with special needs is called a "person/child with development" or "person/child with special needs." In the English-speaking world accepted terms are "handicapped" or "extreme child." In Germany we use the term "handicapped" and "damaged" child, and in France, "Generic handicapped child". Besides the term "disability", the terms disablement, defect, handicapped person are also used. In recent years, the term "person/child with special needs" has been increasingly used (that is for children who have special needs that require additional and special life conditions from an early age). "A child with developmental problems is a child with special needs, and a child with special needs is a CHILD." (downloaded from the internet forums).

A child with developmental problems is a child with special needs, where instead of diagnosis, giving a functional assessment of physical and mental status of the child is needed. Both preserved and damaged abilities of the child need to be found, the family situation and the environment in which they live, it is necessary to find appropriate ways to meet the needs of

the child, because this child can not be the basis for any form of discrimination.

Analysis of the current situation of students with disabilities in Serbia

The current state of the education of students with special needs here in Serbia is organized within the three main types:

1. special education in special schools for children with disorders in mental, sensory, physical and social development, covering 1% of all students;
2. education in special classes of regular schools, composed of students from the same type of disability;
3. full-time education in the same class with other students (integration), but without systematic support and adjustment to the students' special needs, therefore their attainment is below the average of other students and the number of repeaters is large.

Children with disabilities mostly attend special schools, which is well on the basis of the Commission on classification, which assesses the degree and type of disability and education opportunities. This approach suffers from a high level of discrimination. Other categories of children with special needs are mostly educated in the regular education system where they occasionally get help from a professional psychological and educational services in the school. Teachers are not prepared or trained to work with the following categories of children.

There is a category of children with severe and multiple disabilities, permanently put in institutions of closed or semi-closed type which provides the minimum of education and rehabilitation/ habilitation work, or none at all.

Another problem is the large number of children with special needs who are left out of the education system and are not included in any other form of social care and treatment.

Special schools operate as independent and parallel system with no regular interconnection. A child who enters a special system can hardly be moved into the mainstream, but the way to move the child from regular to special system is wide open.

Special school is more suited to the special needs than regular school, in terms of teachers (special education), specific teaching aids, as well as the use of specific teaching methods while working with the students. However, programs don't always recognize individual differences among pupils, and neither related textbooks and exercise books.

Regular school is not well prepared for reception of these students, regarding staff, program, methodological, technical and architectural support. But the Department for the protection of persons with special needs starts process to remove barriers, in order to make physical and social environment accessible to persons with disabilities and achieve their full integration into all aspects of life.

The necessary criterion for admission in regular

school is a certificate of mental and physical development of children and IQ over 65 (which is determined by the psychologist/educator and based on the testing for enrollment in primary school). Teachers in regular schools follow statutory plans and programs and have an obligation to fully realize them until the end of the school year. Tempo and mode of operation policies are determined by the curriculum of the Ministry of Education, and a number of children in one class also has a significant impact. Children with special needs can be, and usually are, identified at the outset when tested by the professional staff. Their task is to predict the adaptation of the child in a regular school and propose further suggestions to parents, considering the best interests of the students and their development. Law on primary-school education says that it is necessary for parents to give their consent if they agree that their child attends some type of special school, on the basis of recommendations of a psychologist or a child categorization commission. If they don't agree, the student must continue their education in a mainstream school.

In recent years, there has been increased discussion about inclusion, or enrollment of children with special needs in regular classes. The main aim is that children with disabilities get the chance to grow, learn and socialize with children with normal development, and that these children can adapt and learn together with children with special needs. In this way, they develop understanding, tolerance, humanity. However, in practice a large number of students in classes, teachers insufficiently trained to work with children with special needs and without instructions and curriculum adapted to these students, comprehensive curriculum that exceeds the speed adjusted to students, without assessing intelligence, confirms that children with special needs do not adapt enough nor have time to learn the material that is provided. Therefore, it is very important that the school is prepared for it, and what is meant by the preparedness of school?

The aim of this work

The aim of this study was to include students of the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences in Jagodina, future teachers who will be working with children with special needs, in the school sports section, through a form of their practical training. In cooperation with psychologists, educators, therapists, teachers and parents, the fourth-year students did IEP for each child with special needs. Students worked with children with special needs, as a sports section, three times a week out of regular hours, where there was a total of 26 children from five elementary schools. The specificity of the inclusive model lays in the fact that the students participated in the establishment of:

1. Individual records of children with special needs.
2. Forming a team for each child with special needs.
3. Development of individual education plans for each child with special needs who were involved in this program.

Also, it was necessary to adjust *the teaching content* to the individual child's needs, as well as *methods and techniques*, and *instructional materials and supplies*.

Sports section was composed of children with the following disabilities:

1. Physically disabled children,
2. Intellectually disabled children,
3. Children with behavioral disorders,
4. Chronically ill children and
5. Children from poor families.

Sports section was implemented in the gym in the "17 October" elementary school three times a week. Sports activities were realized by the students during one school year, where children with special needs from the first to the fourth grade of Jagodina's elementary schools were included. Various exercises were done with the kids: basic games, games and catching passes, throwing, pulling, carrying, pushing, rolling, skipping, with props, without props, with and on the exercise equipment, with the music... with only one goal - to improve and encourage the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children with special needs.

Example of a good practice:

Hyperactivity: Fleeting attention in class, not doing the tasks, especially when they need something to write about, drawing attention of peers in a negative way, leaving their seats without permission...

Areas of support: sustained attention on the tasks, respect for the rules of conduct in the classroom, refraining from obstruction of the peers.

Objectives: Extend attention to perform tasks up to 80%, reduce undesirable behavior to below 5 warnings within one class.

Types of support

Limit time for tasks - for example, will have 5 min. for the 1st task; if they finish early they can move on to another job, and if not, the teacher crosses out the first task and moves to the second. If they complete the second task before time, they can return to the first. The clock is beside them the whole time.

Reward:

1. They can play football on the sports class, because that's what they like to do the most.
2. Rewarding extended attention; a notch in the designated notebook per every warning for undesirable behavior. If the number of notches exceeds the number of 5, teacher writes a message to parents, if not, Marko gets "SMILEY" for the class.
3. Parents will follow/read a teacher's short report every day, and will reward or withhold reward for desirable or undesirable behavior.

Achievements while following this approach:

Professional challenges and opportunities to express creativity;

Teachers are professionally empowered and prepared to pursue educational and behavioral goals for all

children, it is easier for them to face the problems of all kinds;

They become sensitive to diversity and more willing to meet the needs of all children;

Team work is improved;

Cooperation with parents is improved;

It is now easier to children without developmental disabilities to accept diversity as normality, they become sensitive to the needs of their friends, they are ready to provide assistance without hesitation;

Peer learning - children with special needs learn from their peers and accept their model of behavior;

All children learn that it is nice and easy to provide help, and seek for it when necessary;

Teachers and students form a positive attitude towards inclusive education;

Students improve practical training in working with children with special needs;

Cooperation with the local community is enhanced;

Cooperation with the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences in Jagodina is improved.

CONCLUSIONS

Along with the great social, economic, social, cultural and political changes, the moral values of society change too. With the development of science and technology, new forms and methods of work get introduced in educational institutions. Integration of children with special needs in normal and everyday life is possible only if we open ourselves to all aspects of contemporary social developments, aimed to improve the quality of life for children with special needs. With the influence of various forms of assistance in the development of children with special needs, we facilitate their daily life. Involvement in social and cultural activities, and interaction with other children improve the quality of their lives. All living beings, wherever they are and whoever they are should have rights that must be respected in all circumstances.

REFERENCES

- Даниелс, Е., & Стафорд, К. (2001). *Интеграција деце са посебним потребама*. [Integration of children with special needs. In Serbian.] Београд: Центар за интерактивну педагогију.
- Grubović, A. (2006). Ispitivanje fizičkih sposobnosti slabovidnih učenika – ravnoteža. [Experimentation of the physical abilities of visually of impaired students – balance. In Serbian.] *Beogradska defektološka škola*, (2), 109-122.
- Horvat, D. (2002). Edukacija roditelja dece sa usporenim psihomotornim razvojem. [Education of children's parents with delayed psychomotor development. In Croatian.] Zagreb: „Goljak“ Centar za uzgoj i obrazovanja.
- Хрњица, С. (2004). *Школа по мери детета, Приручник за рад са ученицима редовне школе ометеним у развоју*. [Child-friendly School, Handbook for working with students with developmental disabilities of regular school. In Serbian.] Београд: Институт за психологију Филозофског факултета у Београду.
- Ђурашковић, Р., & Живковић, Д. (2009). Sport lica sa posebnim potrebama. [Sport of people with special needs. Niš: Fakultet sporta i fizičkog vaspitanja.]

- Ellen R. D, & Kay, S. (2001) *Интеграција деце са посебним потребама*. [Integration of children with special needs. In Serbian.] Београд: Центар за интерактивну педагогију.
- Kavčić, R. (1975). Uloga fizičkog vaspitanja u razvijanju orijentacije u mobilnosti slepe i slabovide. [The role of physical education on the development of orientation and mobility of blind and visually impaired children. In Serbian. *Specijalna škola*, (24), 285-292
- Kahrović, I., Radenković, O., & Murić, B. (2013). Physical activity and education of parents in children rehabilitation with lokomotor dysfunction. *Activities in Physical Education and Sport*, 3(1), 987-100.
- Ковачевић, Ј., & Арсић, Р. (2006). *Ученици ометени у развоју у редовној школи*. [Students with developmental disabilities in regular schools. In Serbian.] Београд: Друштво дефектолога Србије.
- Крсмановић, Б. (1996). *Час физичког вежбања*. [Class of physical exercise. In Serbian.] Нови Сад: Факултет физичке културе.
- Министарство просвете и спорта републике Србије (2003). *Посебне основе школског програма: први разед обавезног образовања - радни нацрт*. [General fundamentals of school curriculum – operating draft. In Serbian.] Београд: Просветни преглед.
- Шефер, Ј. (1991). *Развојне потребе и личност детета, развој детета*. [Developing needs and personality of child. In Serbian.] Београд: Picadilly Books Co.
- Šmit, V.H.O. (1992). *Osnovne psihološke potrebe deteta, Razvoj deteta*. [The fundamentals of psychological needs of child, Child's development. In Serbian. Београд:]Picadilly Books Co.
- Stanišić, I., & Stanišić, M. (2011). The influence damaged eyesight on motor development. *Activities in Physical Education and Sport*, 1(2), 187-191.
- Требјешанин, Б., & Шефер, Ј. (1991). *Мотивација ученика, Учитељ у пракси*. [Student's motivation, Teacher practice. In Serbian.] Београд: Републички завод за унапређивање васпитања и образовања.
- Warren, D.H. (1994). *Blindness and children: An individual differences approach*. Cambridge NY: Cambridge University Press.

Correspondences:

Sandra Milanović

University of Kragujevac,

Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences

“Milana Mijalkovića” 14, 35000 Jagodina, Serbia

E- mail: sandra3008@open.telekom.rs