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Pre-School Education of Children with Special Educational Needs in Kindergartens

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ABSTRACT

In an age when school was restricted to children who had already learned to read and write at home, there were many attempts to make school accessible to the children of women who worked in factories or were orphans.Individual education with special needs of education in kindergartens including their inclusion in the mainstream education system is one of the most interesting research nowadays especially in western Europe. pre-school children are totally individual at any age, things such as psychomotor, linguistic and personal development. On the other hand, substantial discrepancy is particularly evident who need the special education.This hypothesis focuses on kindergarten teachers' attitudes to inclusive education for children by means of a low risk with a special educational system in kindergartens and to use of the available methods and forms of work on inclusive education in kindergartens.

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INTRODUCTION

A preschool (also nursery school, kindergarten outside the US) is an educational establishment offering early childhood education to children between the ages of three and five, or seven, prior to the commencement ofcompulsory education at primary school. They may be privately operated or government run, and the costs may be subsidized.

The following terms may be used for educational establishments for this age group:

- Kindergarten, is used in many parts of the world, with the exception of the US, Canada, and some states of Australia, where the term is used to refer to the first stage of compulsory education offered at the age of five.
- Pre-K (or Pre-Kindergarten) is an initiative to improve access to preschool for disadvantaged children in the US.
- Nursery School (UK and US)
- Grade 0, which is also sometimes classified as "a mixture between preschool and a school regime".
- Pre-primary

Origins:

In an age when school was restricted to children who had already learned to read and write at home, there were many attempts to make school accessible to the children of women who worked in factories or were orphans.

In 1779, Johann Friedrich Oberlin and Louise Scheppler founded in Strass Bourg an early establishment for caring for and educating pre-school children whose parents were absent during the day. At about the same time, in 1780, similar infant establishments were established in Bayern In 1802, Pauline zur Lippe established a preschool center in Detmold.

In 1816, Robert Owen, a philosopher and pedagogue, opened the first British and probably globally the first infant school inNew Lanark, Scotland. In conjunction with his venture for cooperative mills Owen wanted the children to be given a good moral education so that they would be fit for work. His system was successful in producing obedient children with basic literacy and numeracy.

Developing Areas:

The most important years of learning begin at birth. During these early years, humans are capable of absorbing more information than later on. The brain grows most rapidly in the early years. High quality teachers and preschools have a long-term effect on improving outcomes, especially for disadvantaged students.

The areas of development that preschool education covers varies. However, the following main themes are typically offered.

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- Personal, social, economic and emotional development
- Communication, (including sign language), talking and listening
- World knowledge and understanding
- Creative and aesthetic development
- Mathematical awareness
- Physical development
- Physical health
- Play
- Teamwork
- Self-help skills
- Social skills
- Scientific thinking
- Literacy

Preschool systems observe standards for structure (administration, class size, student–teacher ratio, services), process (quality of classroom environments, teacher-child interactions, etc.) and alignment (standards, curriculum, assessments) components. The curriculum is designed for differing ages. For example, counting to 10 is generally after the age of four.

Research Questions And Research Methods:

The aim of the research is:

- To map kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for children with SEN;
- To describe the risks of inclusive education of children with SEN in terms of kindergartenteachers;
- To map the current situation in the use of methods and forms of work aimed at inclusiveeducation in kindergartens;
- To map previous experience of kindergarten teachers in relation to the integration of childrenwith SEN.

To answer research questions:

- Does positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN prevail among kindergartenteachers?
- Is there a statistically significant association between respondents' experience with integration of children with SEN in kindergartens and their relationship to the inclusion of children with SEN in kindergartens?
- Do kindergarten teachers consider the lack of preparation of the teacher (i.e. low knowledgeof methods and procedures for working in inclusive settings) as the most serious (mostfrequently mentioned) barrier to the inclusion of children with special educational needs inmainstream kindergartens?

The questionnaire, which is the main methodological tool of this research, should lead kindergartenteachers to self-reflection in relation to the method of education of pre-school children. Specifically, in theanswers to questions such as: am I able/unable to identify the specific needs of each child and respond to themwith appropriate pedagogical approaches and strategies?; Am I able/unable to co-operate with the managementof kindergarten, colleagues, parents and the wider public?; Can I prepare a plan or longer-term strategyfor education of heterogeneous classes (groups) of children in kindergarten?; Am I able to analyse the learningprocesses of pre-school children and change teaching strategies, if they show to be ineffective?; Do I manageto compile an individual educational plan for the education of pre-school children with SEN?; Can I formulatemy expectations that relate to the benefits of pre-school education for each pre-school child?; Can I be flexible,creative and concise in an educational situation?; Will I be forced to change "something" /or "what"/ in my nexteducational practices and strategies? (Hájková, Strnadová, 2010)The research survey uses quantitative research methods with qualitative elements (note: a mixedresearch design). From the methodological point of view, questionnaire methods and observation methods areused.A questionnaire survey is conducted in the period of May-July 2013. Kindergartens across the europe were addressed within the survey.Research respondents are kindergarten teachers.The questionnaire used for data collection is anonymous. Self identification of the respondents is made onlyon the basis of regions, where a kindergarten is located.

Findings:

Due to the fact that data collection using the questionnaire method as well as the observation method is currently being implemented in kindergartens in the europe, it is possible to present only partial outputs of this survey. The presented information is based mainly on an analysis of data gathered within the initial pilot study, followed by questionnaire responses received so far and so far realized observation. The results of the research survey cannot be generalized at this time. However, the responses obtained by analyzing the first 100 responses/questionnaires within the research can be considered relevant in relation to the issue. In relation to the attitudes of kindergarten teachers towards inclusive education, on the base of the answers to the questions below it can be stated that teachers have rather a neutral attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN in kindergartens in the europe.

In relation to ensuring the optimal conditions for inclusive education of pre-school children with SEN,the kindergarten teachers, particularly point in a different extent (on a scale from 0-5) to the elimination of a largenumber of children in classrooms (94% of the respondents), as well as to the elimination of the problemsassociated with staffing for the inclusion, i.e. using teaching assistant jobs (91% of the respondents). Furthermore,they point to the need to eliminate the unpreparedness of kindergarten teachers in relation to the knowledge of

thecharacteristics and needs of the children with SEN (82% of the respondents), as well as the low knowledge ofmethods and procedures for working in inclusive settings (79% of the respondents).

Am I able to identify the specific needs of each child and to respond to them with appropriate pedagogical approaches and strategies?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
6	13	45	30	6

Am I able to co-operate with the management of kindergartens, colleagues, parents and thewider public?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	5	39	49	6

Can I prepare a plan or long-term strategy for education of heterogeneous classes (groups) ofchildren in kindergarten?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2	10	58	25	5

Am I able to analyse the learning processes of pre-school children and change teachingstrategies, if they show to be ineffective?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
0	19	46	18	17

Do I manage to compile an individual educational plan for the education of pre-school childrenwith SEN?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	16	56	11	16

Can I formulate my expectations that relate to the benefits of pre-school education for each preschool child?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
8	24	48	13	7

Can I be flexible, creative and concise in an educational situation?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	5	21	31	58

Will I be forced to change "something" in my next educational practices and strategies?

Unable	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
29	38	26	5	2

Conclusion:

Based on the data obtained so far within this research related to the inclusion of pre-school children withspecial educational needs in the world, it can be said that among kindergarten teachers there is mostly a neutral attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEN. Among other things, it also shows that kindergarten teachers in western Europe cannot really define the difference between integration and inclusion of children with SEN. In relation to the problematic aspects of integration/inclusion of pre-school children with SEN, the survey respondents/kindergarten teachers most often point on large numbers of children in kindergarten classes, as well as they refer to problems in staffing for inclusion (note: they miss a teacher's assistant), lack of preparedness of teachers in kindergartens in relation to the knowledge of the characteristics and needs of the children with SEN, as well as the low knowledge of methods and procedures for working in inclusive settings. Other problematic areas of inclusion of pre-school children in kindergartens are seen in the lack of funding for supportive measures and unpreparedness of the social environment/surroundings (intact children and their parents) to the adoption of children with SEN.

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