Profile of inclusive teacher and its role in the process of special-educational differential diagnostics and counselling – comparison of euro-atlantic experience with focus on cultural-linguistic diversity

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to compare the viewing of the sc. profile of inclusive teacher from the standpoint of differential diagnostics, which is necessary for an adequate assessment of capabilities of individuals entering the education process. The creation of the profile is the final result of a survey carried out by the European Commission of the EU, whose aim is to assess the possible implementation of the principles of inclusive education in the context of European educational policy from the very position of adequate role and key competences of an inclusive teacher. Directly related to the development of concept of special needs education, which is no longer a discipline oriented only towards medical understanding of its subject matter, it is necessary to harmonize the requirements of the principles of inclusion with the reality of education profession. A great emphasis should be put on strengthening the role of special needs teachers in the process of diagnostics and continuous counselling, which is an essential condition for the success of inclusive approach. The final part of the paper discusses selected aspects of specifics stemming from cultural-linguistic diversity in education, and emphasis on the balance of mutual congruency of work of individual professionals involved in inclusive education in differential-diagnostic dimension. The author builds on findings earned during her active participation in the project, which she then compares to selected Euro-Atlantic findings.

Keywords: inclusive teacher, inclusion, education, special needs education, special pedagogy, European Commission, diagnostics, differential diagnosis process, counselling, communication ability, cultural language diversity

1 Introduction

The creation of a profile of an inclusive teacher is the result of a task set by the **Euro**pean Commission of the EU in an attempt to assess the possible implementation of the principles of inclusive education in the context of European educational policy from the position of adequate role and competences of an inclusive teacher. To be more specific, it is a key outcome of an extensive project called **TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION** (TE4I) realized within the years 2009–2011 by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Currently, the Czech and Slovak Republic also belong to the member states of this agency, which is supported by European Union institutions such as the European Commission and European Parliament. This agency is an independent and autonomous organization, which was created to represent a platform for co-operation of the member states related to development of pupils with special educational needs. It is also supported by ministries of education of the participating countries (these being member states of the EU), as well as of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, and it is also supported by the institutions of the EU through the programme Jean Monnet within its EU Lifelong Learning Programme. The agency supports collecting, processing and transmission of specific information of European and national value, and it creates for the member states an opportunity for mutual learning through exchanging various experience and knowledge. The projects of this agency included, e.g. Early Childhood Intervention Update (2003–2004), Higher Education Accessibility Guide (HEAG) (since 2009), Multicultural Diversity and Special Needs Education (2006–2008), or Young Views on Inclusive Education – European Hearing 2011 (a conference which took place in 2011 in Brussels with the participation of young persons with disabilities).

Focusing on educational process and on professional, mainly pre-gradual but also lifelong, training of teachers is, according to all member states of the TE4I project, a key issue in the process of inclusive pedagogy and in educating children with various needs, which is also emphasized by the WHO disabilities report from 2011 (WHO, 2011). This professional training must, however, focus on attitudes and personal values, not only on knowledge and skills (for further information see European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011). What is necessary is to focus on training of teachers in elementary education (in the so-called mainstream) to check their readiness for inclusive education.

2 Input premises and main outcomes of the project Teacher Education for Inclusion

The participants in the project Teacher Education for Inclusion were special needs education teachers and representatives of their governmental administration (ministries and national educational agencies), their educators (representatives of universities and other academic institutions), employers (deputies of elementary and secondary schools management), teachers from the so-called mainstream and representatives of their governmental administration, their educators and employers. Other participants were representatives of international organisations and external observers and also direct "users" of inclusive education, i.e. students with special educational needs. Altogether, there were 55 experts from 25 countries, among which were also representatives of UNICEF and UNESCO, representatives of Directorate-General for Education of the European Commission (DG-EAC), representatives of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (OECD-CERI) and representatives of International Bureau of Education (IBE). The continuous and final recommendations of the project are based on the reports regarding educating teachers from 29 countries. A significant source for much of the groundwork was the Eurydice database of EU and the expertise of the approached national experts. A partial outcome is, amongst others, the sc. matrix of the project, accessible on its webpage, summarizing the analysis of literature dealing with politics and research, national reports, study visits of selected experts to individual countries and sc. examples of good practice (for further information see European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

The initial issues were the following key questions: what kind of teachers do we need for inclusive society of the 21st century? Which teacher competences are necessary for actual implementation of inclusive education? That is why the **profile of** an inclusive teacher primarily defines the competences which an efficient inclusive teacher must possess for the purpose of encountering all types of diversities in the educational process. It represents a framework of competence areas which is relatively applicable to all educational programmes for teachers; these areas should be developed during **pre-gradual training of teachers**. The **profile** should also serve as the basis for further, continuing education and professional development of teachers. As far as the methodology of creating the profile is concerned, it was continuously being elaborated since 2009. In this time, more than 400 contributions of interested persons and more than 70 written responses were collected and analysed, including the results of activities related to validation and verification of the acquired data which was running in 2011. The participants in drafting, commenting on and revising of the profile were selected national experts who carried out study visits in selected countries, within which they identified the key factors supporting the subsequent implementation of the profile. The main areas of key competences of an inclusive teacher within the profile are the following four areas (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011):

- Respecting the diversities of pupils based on the premise that the distinctions (differences) between the pupils are understood as a significant source and benefit for education and not as a barrier or a downside.
- Supporting all pupils this means that teachers have high expectations of and set high goals for all pupils.
- Co-operation co-operation and teamwork are the essentials of every teacher's approach.
- Further personal professional development education in this context is an activity connected to learning and teachers must take responsibility for their lifelong learning.

For each key competence, basic attitudes **were determined** as well as abilities and skills, personal beliefs and knowledge. The main recommendations and outcomes of this project for further research and implementation include the following (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011):

- To make more efficient the process of selecting and motivating the applicants for pedagogy studies in relation to the implementation of inclusive education. The initial attribute is chiefly an analysis of the ways which are used to approach and motivate candidates for the teacher profession, but also of the approaches leading to increasing their sustainability both in the studies and mainly in the following teaching practice. Another necessary prerequisite is to increase the number of teachers from various diverse groups while respecting the variety of gender (increasing the number of men in the educational system), language, nationality, culture or with respect to adequate, sufficient representation of teachers with disabilities (so that the conditions for appropriate communicating are met, see e.g. Recommendation 1598, 2003).
- To improve the system of educating teachers in a complex way involving pregradual education, training, mentoring and further professional development. The issues of inclusion and diversity should be, according to recommendations of the project participants, an integral part of the curriculum of programmes of pregradual preparation of all teachers regardless of the preferred or selected age group of pupils or of subjects taught. A continuous evaluation and creating and checking a portfolio of students, their supervision, self-assessment, development of their critical thinking etc., all these activities should become a part of pre-gradual university study programmes. The co-operation of educators of teachers and schools and practice should be developed more intensively and in higher quality, since the realization of teaching practices in the inclusive context seems a little problematic. During their practice, students should be getting acquainted with dealing with critical situations which stem from different attitudes of different groups of teachers (both generation and opinion groups) constituting the teaching staff. In this

respect, students and graduates should learn to create and mainly to sustain higher enthusiasm towards the issues of practical realization of inclusion after their start in practice, where they encounter the "reality" of schools and attitudes and experience of their current, more or less experienced staff. A supporting solution could be providing more significant continual help for graduates of teaching after their job commencement, where a graduate usually loses the previous support provided be university teachers and practice tutors. This could be provided by introducing mentors, who would have a sample portfolio of introductory work at given school created for the needs of starting graduates, but a significant role is, among other things, played by a quality example given precisely during teaching practice. Eventually, the point is to strengthen the teaching profession and to **provide quality educators** of teachers so that the position of educators of teachers is increasingly occupied by experts with knowledge and experience in the field of inclusive conditions. A very interesting topic is also the appeal for providing sufficient opportunities for research and for professional development of teachers in inclusion by supporting co-operation between faculties and by stimulating an "institution-wide" approach to diversity. In some experts' opinion, it is also appropriate to discuss some minimal limit of the length of pedagogical education, especially as regards the teachers of specialized subjects. Boyd et al. speak in this respect about the necessity of at least three-year-long education in pedagogy etc. (Boyd et al., 2007 in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011) with referral to, among others, representatives of Spain or France, who presented their negative experience with the model of acquiring the sc. minimal teaching qualification (e.g. within subject specialization), which means earning a degree in specific subject specialization subsequently complemented by pedagogical minimum. They point out the necessity of changing the study of teaching to the sc. long master study (sc. integrated kind). What is being discussed is also a new dimension of teaching profession, where representatives of Finland recommend sc. design of curriculum for everyone and point out that: "... teachers are researchers supported in continually discussing, analysing and subsequently adapting their teaching..." (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011, p. 29). Some representatives advocate a much more radical attitude and they claim that a teacher who does not accept inclusion does not belong to modern inclusive school system. Italy and Switzerland are of the opinion that for inclusion to be successful, it is necessary to identify with the philosophy of inclusion, otherwise the teacher fails and he/she is subjected to higher risk of health problems and burnout syndrome (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011, further see e.g. Doudin&Lafortune, 2006; Lafortune, Doudin&Curchod, 2010).

- To improve the area of school management. Allen and Harriot (2011) emphasise the critical role of **school management**, especially of the directors. For this reason, one of the main tasks should be ensuring or at least building of positive school climate and culture conditioned chiefly by appropriate material, personal and methodical-educational background which respects individual educational needs of pupils in inclusive environment and reacts to them. Such a climate should be created for all participants of inclusive education (see above) so as to create **really supporting**, **pro-inclusive conditions** (including efficient instructions and instructing, assistance and tutoring, exercising the principles of co-operative learning etc.) (comp. also e.g. Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000). There are of course critics of inclusive education who claim that the support of weaker pupils means, on the other hand, not respecting the needs of more talented pupils. The participants in the projects, however, point out the results of comparing the countries which were the most successful in tests done by organisations OECD and PISA, i.e. which ranked at the top or showed a significant improvement in the recent period. The improvement of conditions for teaching students with weakest results does not have to be at the expense of the more successful ones since the more successful in these comparative surveys were those schools and countries who formulated clear and ambitious conceptual goals in their educational policy, who were better at monitoring the results of students (meaning not only grading), who granted greater autonomy to schools, created an identical curriculum for pupils under 15 years of age, invested greatly into preparation and professional development of teachers and also supported schools and pupils with weaker results in other ways (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011).

3 Categorizing of pupils with SEN and terminology in the field of inclusion related to diagnostics in an environment of diversity

A much discussed issue related to inclusive education is sc. categorising and labelling of students with special educational needs, since the reform of educational policy should support all teachers and key workers in building a clear understanding of the basic premises and implications of using various terminology. According to some negative advocates of the project, "labelling" strengthens comparing, creates space for unwanted formation of hierarchic relations and may also limit the level of expected results and in consequence also of learning. However, in our opinion, identification of pupils is necessary for the process of differential diagnostics and it is so even if we refuse sc. labelling. The relatively positive benefit of labelling is pointed out, among others, by McGrady et al. (in European Agency for Development in Special Needs

Education, 2011). It must be noted, though, that some countries paradoxically adhere to the model of separate education of boys and girls, which is accounted for by e.g. different initial cognitive and emotional level and therefore by a risk of achieving higher results at the beginning of elementary school as far as gender is concerned (see e.g. educational systems of Malta or Ireland). The problem of the sc. "inclusive" terminology is speculations about and instability of individual, though key terms, and defining of what inclusion actually is (see fig. 1). In this respect, we can encounter e.g. "school for everyone", "equal opportunities in educating and approach", "educating for everyone" but this term can just as well be represented by "principled approach to educating and society" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011).

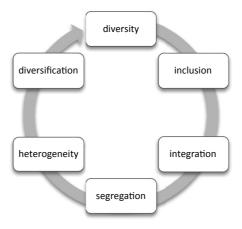


Figure 1: Terms in inclusive education

Precisely in relation to inclusive education, it is necessary to emphasise the paradigm shift in special needs education from the sc. medical model, through integration model up to inclusive, holistic or sc. social model (further see e.g. Vitásková, 2009 or Jesenský in Lechta, 2009), which is based on the initial proclamation that inclusive education does not a priori concern only students with special educational needs or with specific learning disabilities, conduct disorders or everyone in danger of exclusion, but it concerns all participants in the educational process (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011), i.e. pupils and their families, as well as teachers, management of their schools and their educators and, ultimately, the whole society (see fig. 2).

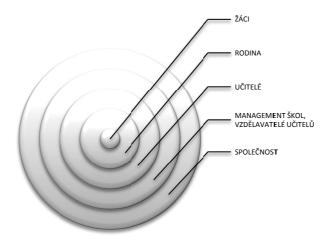


Figure 2: Complex range of inclusion (pupils; family; teachers; school management, educators of teachers; society)

Even in the inclusive process, and maybe precisely in it, it is necessary to identify diversity, but in this context emphasis is put on different approach towards identifying difficulties and "specific needs". The difference concerns the appearance of the problem in the population of a given country, but also migration and transition of views on diversity in population. Differential diagnostics of needs and competences in inclusion is also highlighted as a new role of special education teachers in inclusive system together with a new dimension of counselling. In inclusion, it is necessary, as opposed to e.g. traditional conception of special education, to provide much higher supporting forms of education, counselling, not only to pupils but also to teachers and to parents (see e.g. Vitásková, 2010b). To give an example, we can mention the view on assessing communication competence and communication behaviour. The term and phenomenon watched in this context is "cultural-linguistic diversity" (e.g. Vitásková, 2010a). More extensive studies (comp. e.g. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009) agree that the biggest initial prob**lem which education in inclusive environment** in the context of cultural-linguistic diversity must deal with is:

- the issue of selecting a language used for communication, and
- the problem of potential incorrectly interpreted or hidden language interferences into the area of differential diagnostics towards e.g. specific learning disorders (further e.g. Vitásková, 2010a).

A problem is e.g. incorrect placement of pupils from different cultural and linguistic environment into the special education system or their directing (by teachers, diagnostic and counselling workers) towards special education support and,

alternatively, an incorrect prediction of their cognitive deficit or specific learning disorder (Reindall, 2010 and others), which are mistakes stemming from misunderstanding of the specifics of and deviations in communication which occur precisely as a result of cultural-linguistic diversity. The diagnostics of cognitive abilities, as well as diagnostics of special educational needs, which it is necessary to identify in inclusive education, is for the main part based on assessing the level, quality and efficiency of communication ability, be it its verbal or non-verbal part. This is the task of quality differential diagnostics grounded in quality and objective diagnostic materials, assessment scales. In many countries, however, there is still a lack of relevant diagnostic materials which would meet these requirements as far as both validity and reliability and objectivity are concerned - what is meant here are materials reflecting all aspects (forms and parts) of communication and differences stemming not only from cultural-linguistic diversity but also at the same time from the diversity of special educational needs with regard to medical, social or other difficulties or a combination of them (further also Vitásková, 2011b). Often, materials are used from countries with a longer tradition of diversity and respecting cultural-linguistic needs (e.g. the USA), however, they are mostly used only in their translated version, without a quality professional language adaptation and standardization for the conditions in the Czech Republic and cultural and linguistic groups living there (whereas this structure is not stable, it is subjected to macroeconomic and microeconomic pressure and society-wide changes). Moreover, there is often no difference defined between the sc. "culture-friendly" tests used for differential diagnostics of deficits stemming from cultural-linguistic diversity and tests used for pedagogical-psychological evaluation of population of pupils with special educational needs, which leads to the fact that these groups of pupils are ordered into the same category or this fact is a "logical" consequence of this situation. A common phenomenon is an inclination towards preferring non-verbal components of tests with, however, subsequent absence of possibility to significantly compare the actual discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal part of abilities (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009). Non-verbal communication is in fact a very significant source of cultural specifics and differences, it can lead to misunderstandings or even to conflicts and from many experts' point of view, it is much more important than verbal communication.

A different perception of non-verbal communication can, however, paradoxically be influenced by the expert's focus on special needs education or directly on the area of communication and its disruptions, which are to a certain extent present in all kinds of diversity (see the problems of sc. symptomatic speech disorders or deviations and specifics of communication – e.g. Vitásková, 2011a). In special needs education, a specific role is played by e.g. codification of non-verbal communication. **Non-verbal communication in persons with special educational needs** has a specific place and character in the context of communication of e.g. deaf persons,

blind persons, persons with deaf-blindness or autistic individuals. Seemingly supporting non-verbal tokens can be of the main communication value, which can be used in e.g. alternative or augmentative communication. The manifestations of impaired co-verbal behaviour can be noted during speech act as grimaces during speech, before commencement of speech or in its course, as strange body movements, socially inappropriate behaviour conditioned in fact by deviations from the pragmatic level of communication (not respecting the speaker-listener communication pattern) etc. Their causes can be physiological, as well as psychogenic and their secondary consequences can be even much more serious than the primary disruption of e.g. the flow of speech or of articulation itself – they might be aesthetically disturbing or might distract attention from the content of speech, they might become an automatic habit and so grow even much more difficult to remove than the impaired verbal communication itself (Lechta, 2003). Impaired co-verbal behaviour can also arise for the purpose of involuntary or volitional compensation (e.g. the escape of expiratory airflow through the nose) (Kerekrétiová, 2000). In the context of inclusive education, we can also encounter misinterpreting of non-verbal performance of pupils, which is considered similar to displays of specific learning disabilities. Fletcher & Navarett (2011) state in the results of their critical study focused on categorising and evaluating Latin-American students in the USA (in ibid) that in students who acquire the majority language as a secondary language there is often seen a high non-verbal score in language-based abilities (reading, writing, speaking or listening). The profile of student and other similar students and the results of their tests indicate an average and above-average non-verbal score and a low score in performance tests of verbal abilities, indicating discrepancy typical for specific learning disorders.

Because of a significant increase in interest in the problems of autism, even in the context of inclusive education, we believe it is appropriate also to mention the communication specifics in the sc. autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Conti-Ramsden, Simkin a Botting (2005) state that in individuals with specific language impairments (SLI) there is a **higher risk of coincidence with ASD** and for this reason, the absence of autism disorders cannot be understood as a criterion which would rule out the diagnosis of SLI in its narrower terminological sense evoking rather a subtype of developmental dysphasia (comp. e.g. Vitásková, 2008). According to the results of a survey carried out in the investigating team of Říhová et al. ("Analysis of the current state of care provided in early age and of speech therapy intervention in persons with ASD" - Specific research no. PdF_2010_020. Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc, 2010/2011. Principal Investigator: Mgr. Alena Říhová; Investigating team: Vitásková, Pastieriková, Urbanovská, see http://www.uss.upol.cz/poruchy-autistickeho-spektra/o-projektu.php) and in the team of Říhová and Vitásková (Speech therapy intervention in persons with autism spectrum disorder. Specific research no. PdF_2011_010. Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc, 2011/2012. Principal Investigator: Mgr. Alena Říhová; Co-Investigator: doc. Mgr. Kateřina Vi*tásková*, *Ph.D.*, 2011–2012), experts in interdisciplinary teams involved in the process of complex diagnostics and intervention in children with ASD believe **the most demanding areas of working with clients with ASD** to be:

- making contact,
- difficulties when overcoming communication barrier,
- subsequent building of a working communication system.

These surveys showed, apart from other things, that the experts involved in diagnostics and early autism intervention do not sufficiently co-operate, their co-operation is often merely accidental and for this reason, special-educational activity in this respect should be transformed into a new dimension which would put more emphasis on counselling, mutual support, communication and co-operation with parents, all of which play a key role in inclusion. Parents must be much more intensively involved in working with the child and they should also participate in differential diagnostics (further e.g. Říhová&Vitásková, 2012; Vitásková, 2010b).

The outcomes of the project TE4I also agree on the necessity for support of pedagogical-psychological character. As pointed out earlier (ibid.), many parents cannot function as relevant "home co-pedagogues", which is technically an a priori assumption of inclusive system, since they have similar genetically conditioned difficulties as their children. Moreover, such involvement of theirs in the intervention is often demanding, frustrating for them and it increases stress factors, especially if parents do not identify with the inclusion of their child, if it is the unavoidable or only form of education (Vitásková, 2010b). Runswick-Cole (2008) or Yssel et al. (2007) give us through their research a possibility of comparison of Great Britain, the USA and South African Republic, which implies that the positive approach of parents in interdisciplinary intervention team decreases with the increasing extent of their self-justification and self-realization. Parents understand inclusion in a much more complex way (i. e. also from the point of view of general attitude and approach) than teachers do, who focus their effort and attention more on specific problems connected to specific learning difficulties etc. Parents are, on the other hand, much more sensitive as regards perception of respect, equality, participation in decision-making and co-operation in communication with teachers and with professional environment, and they even assess some teachers in elementary education as not ready for inclusion, although officially, teachers must accept inclusive educational strategies and system. However, if teachers themselves do not in fact internally identify with them, inclusion fails. Parents perceive their children in inclusion as "invisible", which leads to negative feelings of both the parents and of the pupils themselves. Pupils with medium or serious forms of special educational needs (SEN) are still de facto excluded into special classes or conditions (see e.g. studies in USA) and parents must be supported also because of often higher demands for financial and emotional commitments for providing sufficient out-of-school supporting services. Providing these services is, however, beginning to be (also in connection with worldwide economic crisis) above standard, which requires funding from private sources (e.g. costs of physiotherapy or speech therapy services etc.).

4 Summary

The basis for the author's opinion was a content analysis of available published papers and documents, as well as participant observations and interviews with pedagogues, pupils and parents focused on the problems of inclusion in relation to special educational needs in the countries of the EU carried out during inspection trips within the EU (e.g. within participation in the project Teacher Education for Inclusion in co-operation with European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education) and in the USA (Georgia, Ohio, South Carolina). The selected outcomes concern mainly the issues of inclusive education in the context of cultural-linguistic diversity. Since we already discussed this topic in earlier publications, we refer to some of them for the possibility of a deeper understanding of much of the context.

This paper is also a partial outcome of a current project of the specific research *PdF_2012_012*, which is being investigated (under the title "*Impaired communication*" ability from the point of view of the impact of its symptomatology on the interdisciplinary co-operation of experts and family in complex intervention – the specific role of special pedagogue and speech therapist") at the Department of communication and sensoric disorders at the Institute of Special Education Studies at Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc (Principal Investigator: Kateřina Vitásková, co-investigators: Alena Říhová, Renata Mlčáková, Jiří Langer, Monika Kunhartová, Monika Weilová, Martina Cermáková). The project focuses on impaired communication ability from the point of view of the impact of its visible, but also of the more difficult to identify or hidden symptomatology on the everyday diagnostics and education of individuals in the context of interdisciplinary co-operation of experts involved in its complex intervention. The aim of the project is, on the basis of selected partial research, to analyse the specific impact of representative types of impaired communication ability (selected in advance) and the extent of perception and identification of these impacts on reality, quality and efficiency of interaction and communication of experts involved in their diagnostics, education and complex intervention, and thus to react to the current transformation of European education and special needs education approach towards inclusion.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the efficiency of intervention activity in inclusion is ensured providing there is mutual co-operation of individual experts and parents, and the development of a working communication system is preferred. In this respect, we can agree with Luterman (in Falsher, Fogel, 2012, p. 193-194) that "...speech, language, hearing, and swallowing disorders do not occur in isolation but impact an individual's social and adaptive functioning within the family and extrafamilial relationships. While the client's disability inevitably impacts their role in the family, inclusion of the family in the provision of services can be empowering and can give family members an opportunity to work collaboratively on the problem. In any case, the family can provide living strategies that minimize dependency...". Identification and stimulation of communication ability of pupils is, however, determined by a wide range of various factors which make its realization more difficult and place higher demands on the workers in inclusive system. It is vital to incessantly carry out continuous differential diagnostics and evaluation of the efficiency of the intervention process as regards communication deviations, specifics and deficits in the inclusion process, and to ensure the readiness of teachers for inclusive conditions within pregradual education of teachers, which involves not only theoretical but also practical knowledge in the field of communication impairments and deviations (from the area of special needs education, psychological, linguistic, medical and other disciplines), but also of various communication specifics and deviations. It seems necessary to understand the position of individual experts in the interdisciplinary team involved in the problems of communication ability, with a new emphasis on inclusive approach related to educational as well as clinical and counselling conditions and environment.

5 Literature

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