

Description of chosen factors of upbringing and education of people with disabilities

Hanáková, A. et al. *Deskripce vybraných faktorů výchovy a vzdělávání u osob se zdravotním postižením*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2018. ISBN 9788024452944

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Inclusive education and, consequently, attitudes towards pupils with disabilities have recently become widely discussed topics, both among the general public and professionals involved in educational field. In this context I have experienced reading a book “*Description of chosen factors of upbringing and education of people with disabilities*” by A. Hanáková et al. Originally, due to the title of the book, I assumed that the publication would focus on the issue of the needs of children with disabilities. I supposed that it would contain a list of basic factors, which could help teachers with their decisions how to work with learners with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive classes, providing ideas of what to consider and what to focus on to make teachers’ work effective. For that reason the actual content of the book at first did not meet my expectations. Nevertheless, gradually I became interested in this publication as it presents interesting research results that may become useful in upbringing and education of these children, albeit from a different, wider perspective.

The publication is based on a three-year research that was carried nationwide in the Czech Republic from 2015 to 2017. The aim was to obtain background information to describe the concept of education and its value from the view of the adolescents with disabilities. The author’s team proceeded from the assumption of a different conception in the case of pupils with physical or sensory disabilities on one hand and intact pupils on the other hand. Except obtaining data and building the value concept of education the researchers’ additional aim was to verify the applicability of the used research tool and to identify points for special-educational or psychological intervention usable for learners with physical and sensory disabilities. The 92-page publication is divided into six chapters.

The research was carried out in three stages. The first, in 2015, focused on pupils’ attitudes to education. The research sample consisted of secondary school learners with physical, visual and hearing impairment and intact learners as a control

sample. The questionnaire survey examined pupils' opinions on education and the factor analysis was used to describe the results. It was found out that there were not significant differences between the opinions of the individual groups, because all of them considered education as important, valuable, a guarantee of good status in society, the way to further career and material security. Students with disabilities also conceded important financial demands of education and all groups stated that hardworking and contacts played an important role. Prevalent results of the positive contribution of education were very similar in all groups, so the authors chose for categorization the negative attitudes that were in minority. Depending on that, the following factors were defined within each cohort. Learners with hearing impairment: *"Education is expensive and it brings nothing."* *"Education is not necessary."* *"I will make a living without education."* Learners with visual impairment: *"The main thing is to be able to work."* *"Education is important for career."* Learners with physical disabilities: *"Being able to work and having contacts is important."* *"More important than education is being able to work."* Intact pupils: *"Diligence and contacts are more important than education."* *"Studies do not enrich you much, it only supports business."* This extensive chapter is well arranged, using clear tables and graphs for each item of the questionnaire. As well methodology is clearly explained and justified. Due to very similar results in all groups it is worth considering the use of more specific questions in the questionnaire, because each group of respondents face different educational problems related to a specific type of disability and its severity and the studied field plays an important role as well.

The other research project done during the following year focused on families of children with disabilities with the aim to identify the attitudes, possibilities and concerns of parents that shape the environment and its climate for education in the Czech Republic and PRC, with the Parent PARQ/Control scale of Parental Educational Styles used as a research tool. The research carried out in the Czech Republic was done with a sample of children aged 10–12 (44% intact and 56% learners with SEN – with physical, hearing and visual impairments). In the case of learners with physical disabilities the PARQ score was slightly different from the others so it can be concluded that these children perceive their fathers generally as loving ones. It was found out that there were not differences between the perception of the family environment of children with SEN and intact children, all of them perceived the family environment as favourable, supportive and open. The chapter is rather brief and the authors probably assumed at least basic knowledge of the research method of the reader and what I miss in this chapter is explaining the role of China in this research, as it is mentioned only at the beginning of the chapter, in the introduction, but it does not appear further in the text.

The third research project done in 2017 focused on teachers and intact students in order to find out teachers' feelings, attitudes and concerns associated with work with learners with disabilities and also attitudes of intact learners towards their peers with disabilities. A questionnaire surveys were carried out in both groups with following results. It was found out that the teachers were concerned about the education of learners with SEN and they felt somewhat uncertain in that field, because it was not their choice to work in inclusive environment and they felt neither sufficiently prepared for it nor sufficiently informed. Furthermore, it was found out that most of intact pupils did not have sufficient awareness of the issue of people with disabilities. 75% of them were not able to characterize disability, about a half of teenage respondents were unable to comment on the life conditions of people with disabilities in the Czech Republic and similar amount would not meet the request for assistance. 80.5% of pupils did not take advantage of extracurricular educational offers on such topic and 95.3% never used extracurricular activities focused on the field of work for people with disabilities. Overwhelming majority of intact learners did not have enough information on that issue from school and nearly all of them did not have any negative experience with people with disabilities. 73.2% found study opportunities incomparable to healthy learners and 65.7% of students could not imagine the existence and functioning of pupils with disabilities in the class. In my opinion, the facts presented in this part of the research together with the numbers point out a rather serious problem that we daily encounter in educational practice and often do not even realize its existence. It is good that scientists are interested in it, because these findings could lead to a positive change on a larger scale.

In conclusion, the book provides important information that can be beneficial both in the practice of inclusive education itself and in the professional training of future teachers. The research that focused on pupils with disabilities presents valuable information that can play role in searching for motivation of pupils with SEN and preparing them for their future career. The survey data gained in the family environment confirm that the family background is an important factor which positively influences the intervention and affects the education of children with SEN. The third stage of the research introduces important findings from the environment of teachers and intact peers. Such findings imply that for successful inclusion it is necessary to ensure that existing teaching staff are better informed, advised and supported, the problematics of education of children with SEN should be included in the training programs of students of pedagogy and due to low awareness of intact learners about this issue it is worth considering incorporating information about learners with disabilities into the curriculum to increase their competences.

Ethical principles were respected throughout the whole research project and research tools together with statistical methods are introduced and justified within

each survey. The text is clear, brief, complemented by suitable tables and graphs. The research goal was fulfilled and the book is ended by recommendations for practice.

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