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**CONFINED BY CATEGORIES  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF SEN INTEGRATION IN  
HUNGARY THROUGH TEACHERS' ATTITUDE AND  
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT**

**Theses of Doctoral thesis (PhD)**

Doctoral Advisor

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## **Topic of the dissertation**

The dissertation is based on impact assessment of inclusion of 8-16 year-old students with special educational needs (SEN), especially those with learning disabilities and mild intellectual disability (MID) (*Lányiné, 2017*) and learning and/or attention deficit disorder within the framework of Hungarian public education system, with application of quantitative instruments. The assessment has been conducted in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years in Baranya county schools on the aspects of teachers' attitude and student achievement.

## **Proposal of the dissertation**

Assessment of inclusion and student achievement, success in Hungary is unprecedented also in case of students with special educational needs. International research take the link between inclusive school environments and students' success as evidence (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2004). However, inclusive school environment can only be achieved with inclusive teachers' attitude. The database developed during the study and macro-statistical data valid for the research period demonstrate that exclusion of the examined group becomes more and more intense every year. This justifies the examination of effectiveness of SEN integration. During the course of the effectiveness check, besides assessment of teachers' attitude and students' achievement, analyzation of the legal environment effective during the research, as well as inclusion indices of the sampled institutions are also explored to a relevant extent.

## **Structure of the dissertation**

- In the first section the topic of the dissertation is explained and proposition of the research is presented. In this content unit the placing of the topic within scientific classification, justification of the relevance of the topic, the relevance of the issue and research questions and hypothesis testing are included.
- In the second section a literature overview concerning special education needs is presented. Here the terminology applied in Hungary is compared with international definitions and models.
- In the third section interpretation of the concept of inclusion related to SEN integration is explored and conclusions concerning inclusion and effectiveness are summarized.
- In the fourth section the pedagogical interpretation of teachers' attitude is included. In this unit the working definition of 'attitude' applied in the research is also specified.
- In the fifth and sixth sections presentation of the methodological instruments of the research, and exploration and justification of the selection technique of the method are explained. Considering, that an unprecedented mathematical analytical method was applied for analyzation of the results of attitude assessment, construction of a separate, sixth thematic and content unit was justified. Demonstration of measurement methodology instruments was followed by presentation of sampling procedures and explanation of sample specificity.

- In the seventh section assessment results and their analysis is included, followed in the eight chapter by detailed analysis and summary of the research results, and the conclusion.
- In the conclusion part reflections concerning the research and additional conceptual complements are included. Collecting these into a separate unit was justified, since it contains important and concise statements, however incorporation of them into the above chapters would have potentially provided difficulties in their interpretation.

## **Theses of the research**

The accepting and rejecting attitude towards SEN integration can be measured by using quantitative instruments. In the course of measuring those background variables can be identified that in the development of the inclusive teachers' attitude play a vital role. These hypothetical background variables during the research were the following:

- school location (county seat, town, village)
- number of years served in the occupation
- qualification, school subjects taught
- presence of SEN students in the institution, class
- average class size
- sex/gender of person completing the questionnaire
- special education competence

Performance indicators defined in the framework of research within the sampled SEN students are more favourable at inclusive institutions. This also implies that in schools examined in the research, SEN inclusion can be raised to institutional level.

Inclusive teachers' attitude and the school's inclusion index can be directly linked together. This can be also measured concerning students' progress and performance in school with quantitative tools. Namely, as a result of more inclusive teachers' attitude more favourable performance can be identified within the group of SEN students also, as estimated by the international models and theories.

## **Research methodology**

Teachers' attitude concerning integrated education of SEN students was conducted with an improved version of an already tried and tested questionnaire. The starting point was the questionnaire included in Horváthné Moldvay Ilona's study (2006): *Attitűdvizsgálat pedagógusok körében az integrált nevelésről* (Teachers' attitude assessment on inclusive education), of which an enhanced version was used.

Achievement of SEN students was defined as results of standardized tests specified in technical protocols concerning diagnosing SEN and this can be considered as the work definition of achievement in the research.

In case of the institutions the inclusion index (*Booth and Ainscow, 2011*) concerning examination of inclusive environment was used.

The data of results of questionnaire for assessment of teachers' attitude were analyzed by SPSS Statistics software version 23 (Mann-Whitney U test, ANOVA).

## **Results of the research**

The concept of teachers' attitude within the field of pedagogy was successfully correlated based on the applied work definition and the research results.

Selection of SEN students was according to classification practice of laws effective during the research. So it should therefore be assumed that based on criteria of the law the sample was homogenous. However, the research results proved that the sample tested is far from being so uniform, as it would have implied by the diagnostic system in Hungary. Pupils of low intellectual ability, balanced profile (performing in WISC-IV subtests with low standard deviation) and of low intellectual ability but scattered profile and students with average and high intellectual ability, balanced and scattered profile just simply cannot be included in the same single group and measurable results can be detected. In half of the samples intellectual ability of children with SEN, learning disabilities was at least 20% lower, as normal distribution would suggest it; and 55% of the students achieved inferior results at the pedagogical tests as would have been presumed based on their profile. This raises the possibility for the two samples being the same, meaning integration of the students of lower intellectual ability and learning disabilities is failing in the most significantly measurable rate. This suggests that the total test indicator i.e. the IQ rate is not sufficient information in itself concerning integration and that a more enhanced

and qualitative analysis of the learning skills profile detected by the cognitive tests would also be necessary

The additional surveys have revealed that changing institutions of the SEN students follow a specific pattern in the sampled population. Besides that, distribution of the students with different intellectual abilities however, did not differ despite that in the assessed institutions neither, but there was relevant difference among the students' performance. Based on this, inclusion cannot be identified in the period of research.

No specific pattern was discovered among the sampled institutions, based on that SEN integration would be more effective to a relevant extent in one or the other school. This is caused by the fact that inclusion of SEN children to an institutional level was unable to be raised, and good practice keeps on working just in case of individual teachers. Also, based on the attended classes there were no significant methodological differences that could be defined.

Based on the data, neither methodological change, nor replacement of the diagnostic aspect took place to a reassuring degree, and inclusiveness still awaits. Law still defines learning disabilities as a diagnosis and anomaly in the nervous system. The earlier presented statistical data show that SEN students are failing in the public education system in Hungary.



Inclusion was unable to be explicitly detected, that could refer to the fact that SEN students could also be affected by restrictive attitude of school managers (*Arató, 2015*), despite that so far all this has been surveyed only among Gypsy/Roma students.

Based on the results of present research and literature analysis it can be summarized that the connection between students' effectiveness and intelligence is more complex, and intellect might be considered at best random variable, not an omnipotent one.

In the sample examined in the research, inclusiveness cannot be observed, one could describe it at best as integration (*Illyés, 2000*). Since 2006 those new paradigms in special education do exist (*Artiles, 2003*), based on that the diagnostic system or at least observations of the diagnosis should have been reconsidered, however this did not take place with the adoption of the public education act in 2011. This was supported by the data and the fact that the term multiple disadvantages and SEN status still can be linked with each other (*Vida, 2016*) (*Erőss, 2017*) through statistical data (*KIFIR, 2015*) even if the underlying reasons are not yet accurately known and disclosed. The conceptual confusions specified based on the sources and the measured results referred to that, revealed that quantitative analysis and interpretation of test results applied for SEN status diagnosis are not sufficient. This was proven by that in the sampled institutions neither the applied methodology nor method of working, nor class size in itself was not enough to facilitate inclusion. Inclusive classes (*Tetler, 2006*) and

inclusive schools (*Ainscow and Booth, 2011*) can be defined along many more variables.

Relevant factors in attitude assessment, that is as evaluable background variable in the development of inclusive attitude are the existence of special education knowledge and whether there is or was any SEN students in the class of the assessed teacher. Definitely those teachers were more rejective that have not encountered any SEN students before and those who had no knowledge at all concerning SEN, that has been predicted by every model applied in definition of attitude, that were mainly based on Allport's definition.

However, this all calls for caution, since there were teachers that had extremely rejective attitude, who had special education qualification. From this the following can be drawn: development of attitude is a process of complex background and is multifactorial, further examination of it is justified, considering the assessment results.

Based on the results found further research can be proposed, considering that several interrelations have been surfaced that disproved the previous theoretical models or although that were predicted by the mentioned theoretical models, but offered no information concerning their detailed background. For example, that inclusive environment and SEN students' performance was not

correlated in the sampled group, in spite the fact that the applied technical models regarded it as evident. Further examination of that can be justified, whether it is a unique case and can be detected in the assessed sample and interval only, only or it is a general phenomenon.

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