



SCOPE OF STUDENTS INTEGRATED INTO NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN STARA ZAGORA REGION IN THE YEARS 2008-2010.

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ABSTRACT

The access to education of children with special educational needs is guaranteed by the international and Bulgarian legislation. The integrated education is performed as priority. The diagnosis of the children is done by a Complex Pedagogical Assessment Team and is carried out by the Resource Center for Facilitating the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Pupils with Special Educational Needs. The information from both institutions about children in integrated form of education on the territory of Stara Zagora Municipality /the region for which the institutions are responsible/ shows a steady increase. The integrated education of children with special educational needs finds its still more and more successful realization. It is a result of the joint work of all responsible institutions.

Key words: Integrated education, inclusive society, special educational needs, special pedagogical approaches, regulatory framework, resource support, supportive environment, diagnostic groups, expert panels.

The idea of integrated education is based on several international and national regulations. The most significant among them are the UN Convention on the Child Rights, the UNESCO Declaration of Salamanca /1994/ , the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of the opportunities of disabled people, the Institutional framework of the European Union and the Madrid Declaration, adopted at the European Congress of people with disabilities and others.

Bulgaria goes on its way to turn what was written in the document into reality. Integrated education of children with special educational needs is currently a purposeful state policy. The necessary legal frame was established for its implementation and the government outlines strategies and policies and executes them through its bodies. Active work is in progress to change attitudes and find broad public support.

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The basic principle of integrated education is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences that they may have. (1)

The vision of what integrated education is can be found in the scientific research of a lot of authors. Vladimir Radulov formulates his understanding as follows: "Integration is a peculiar phenomenon between the individual and the group. It does not mean assimilation of the individual by the group or of one group by another, it is a real mutual penetration through informal relationships. Today, integration is both a purpose and a major strategy of the activity, the institutions dealing with education and rehabilitation of the disabled, which require fundamental changes in their structure and approaches. Successful integration means a fundamental change in the quality of life of children with special educational needs"(2) Vl. Radulov notes that there may also be "unsuccessful integration" if it is just an automatic removal of the child with SEN in mainstream schools and could lead to such extremes as deprivation of the

personality and aspiration for closed communities. (2)

In literature and in practice the term "inclusive education" is used which means including training, or, in other words, the school must become tolerant and welcoming to all students, to accept everyone by creating the conditions for this. (1) According to P. Korukina Stresova the concept of "integrated education" is more common. M. Baeva writes that in most countries, the two concepts are viewed as clearly different - integration is seen as a return of the pupils with SEN in mainstream classes and the integration implies a substantial change in the way the school functions in order to adjust itself to meet the needs of the disabled child and on the other hand, improving and ensuring the conditions for empathy and a sense of belonging to all children. (3)

The vision of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science is reflected in the published National Plan for the integration of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the public education system. The following definition is given there "Definition of integrated education *

Education through integrated training is a strategy to achieve the main goal of developing inclusive society, enabling all children and adults, regardless of their sex, age, abilities, ethnicity, disability or HIV status to participate in it and have their contribution.

The term "integrated education" used in this document also includes the meaning, put in the concept of "inclusive education" (4). Integrated training is seen as a process which requires the provision of the necessary resources - administrative, material and methodical, to ensure a supportive school environment. The document specified the tasks and responsibilities shared between institutions. It clearly outlines all the steps that lead to success. The establishment of a National Social Committee for coordination, monitoring, analysis, evaluation of the policy for integration of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases and the local bodies at district level is stipulated. An important point is the proposal representatives of NGOs to

participate in them. The Ministry of Health is expected to create a new assessment system for disability, and by BCU to organize the activity in disease prevention. To develop activities for early diagnostics and rehabilitation of the disabilities in children. The task of establishing a unified information system for children with disabilities from 0 to 18 years of age is assigned to the SACP. This will greatly assist the work of professionals targeted at early orientation towards diagnosis of educational needs and finding the necessary support. The diagnosis of the children is carried out by the Complex Pedagogical Assessment Team in the Regional Educational Inspectorates /CPAT in REI/. Its structure, authority and obligations are set forth in the Regulations for Implementing the Law on Public Education from Article 6 to Art.7 including. In the beginning of 2009 the legal frame was enriched with the creation of ORDINANCE N 1 of 23-rd January 2009 for the education of children and pupils with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. The children and pupils with special educational needs are defined in Art. 2. These are the children and students with:

1. different kinds of disabilities - sensory, physical, mental (mental retardation), multiple disabilities;
2. language-speech disorders;
3. learning difficulties (5)

The same document further describes in detail the activities and responsibilities of CPAT in REI. km.

The aim of this study was to examine the scope of students in integrated form of education in Stara Zagora in the past and present school year, by diagnoses and educational level. The main source of information is a Report-analysis on the activities of the complex pedagogical assessment team in the Regional Educational Inspectorate - St. Zagora for the 2008/2009 school year (6) and Information about the of Activity of the Resource Center for Facilitating the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Pupils with Special Educational Needs -Stara Zagora Region from 05.2010 and data from TEMP - St. Zagora in the Region for the period 2004 to 2009 for primarily disabled children under 16 years of Age (7).

Through the study of primary information, comparison and analysis of the results the actual scope of the children in an integrated form of education will be monitored, the need for deployment of the system in the future will be outlined aiming to satisfy the needs of resource support for the children in compulsory school age in our region.

In the past ten years active work is done to raise awareness and change the attitudes in society towards people with disabilities, especially children with special educational and pedagogical needs. The development of science gives us earlier, more accurate opportunities for diagnostics of problem areas. The network of resource centers and facilities has expanded and the access to specialists has become easier. Parents seek support for the education of children requiring special approaches to support their education. This implies increasing the number of children integrated in natural environment - kindergartens and comprehensive schools.

Essence – Information analysis.

As a structure of the Ministry of Health, the Regional Health Center – Stara Zagora collects and processes health information. It enters the data base of the National Health Information Center. The information that was given to us for primarily certified children under the age of 16 by Territorial Expert Doctor Commission /TEDC/ on the territory of Stara Zagora Region. The information covers the period from 2004 to 2009 /the information for 2009 by diagnoses are in the process of being précised/. The main indicator for the increase of the population is the number of children born alive for one year. Within the monitored years, they are the least in 2005 – 3050 and most in the last 2009 year – 3193 children. The numbers indicate preserved values and slight increase. As a whole, there is a positive tendency for increase. The matter with their health condition is just the opposite. The number of primarily certified by TEDC children also increases but with faster rate. In 2004, they were 192, in 2009 already being 361. (Table1).

Table 1. Number of live born in Stara Zagora / Number of primary certificated children under 16. by years of TEMP-Stara Zagora

Year	Number of live births	Number of certificated primary years children under 16
2004	3172	192
2005	3050	292
2006	3138	364
2007	3058	333
2008	3102	297
2009	3193	Data are currently being

The dynamics by diagnoses is of great interest. The disease significant regarding the future educational and pedagogical needs of the children are: class 05. Mental and behavioral disorders – here we have mental retardation, children psychosis, disorders in the behavior and development, hyperkinetic disorders; class 06. Nervous system diseases – encephalitis, meningitis, epilepsy, hydrocephaly, children cerebral paralysis; class 07. Disease of the eye and its appendices; class 08. Diseases of the ear and the mastoid projection; 17. Inborn abnormalities, deformations, chromosome aberrations, etc., but, due to the insufficient information now, they will be a topic of

future research. Here comes the question – why should attention be paid to evidence of primary disability of children? We are looking for the answer in many directions. The monitoring of the frequency of these diseases gives us opportunity to plan the activities and costs for the necessary health care, social support, educational needs, the number, type and qualification of experts who perform them. Tracing and prognosis of the number of children who are forthcoming to have a CPAT assessment and could be a target of resource support. Another important issue is the diagnostics and the criteria on which it is being done. The inertia of the medical model has not yet been

overcome in the Special Pedagogy. The documents issued by TEDC are the main document when going to CPAT (8)

The Complex Pedagogical Assessment Team in The Regional Educational Inspectorate has the task to perform individual assessment of the educational needs of the children. By evidence from the Report for the activity of the Commission in the school 2008/2009, the Commission conducted its sessions every month. Leading experts in this field from the region were included in it. Psychological support is done to parents or guardians. Consultations with parents, children and teachers were conducted.

The Resource Centers for Facilitating the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Pupils with Special Educational Needs are state servicing units – out-of-school pedagogical establishments in the system of public education. Their main purpose is to facilitate the successful integration and inclusion of the children and pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in the comprehensive school environment. (9)

The information collected by both institutions shows the dynamics in the

development. In the beginning of the school year 2008/2009 - 294 children and pupils were educated in the integrated form of education and they increased to 398 in the end of the year. The increase is due to the monthly sessions of CPAT. This flexible work approach gives the option for constant inclusion of the children with SEN in the educational system. In the school year 2009/2010, towards May, according to the information of the Resource Center, a total number of 457 students undergo integrated education. Although this school year has not finished, the increase of 59 students is obvious. The dynamics of the information by diagnostic groups shows the greatest increase with children with educational difficulties + 26, next comes the group of the children with mental retardation + 14, children with psychics disorders +10, children with language-speech disorders +9. There are no new children in the group with hearing and visual difficulties. There is a decrease in the groups of children with locomotive difficulties /children cerebral paralysis/, physical impairments -3 and with those with multiple impairment - 4. In the rest of the diagnostic groups, there is also an increase. (Table2)

Table 2. Number of integrated children with SEN in school and 2008/09g 2009/10g. in diagnostic profiles.

Diagnosis		Number of integrated children and pupils with SEN in the school year increase		difference
		2008/2009	2009/2010	
1	Hearing difficulties	23	23	0
2	Visually impaired	11	11	0
3	Mental retardation	134	148	+14
4	Movement difficulties / cerebral palsy / physical disabilities	37	34	-3
5	Multiple Disabilities	21	17	-4
6	Learning difficulties	57	83	+26
7	Language, speech disorders	66	75	+9
8	Autism	3	5	+2
9	Down Syndrome	3	5	+2
10	Psychiatric disorders	12	22	+10
11	Other	31	34	+3
	Total:	398	457	59

Last year, the education of children with SEN was done in 60 schools and 31 kindergartens and in this year – in 68 schools and in 31 kindergartens. The increase of the educational establishments may be explained with the enhanced awareness and the support the head teachers and the kindergarten and school teachers receive as well as with the opportunity for additional qualification on SEN children problems through workshops, meetings, discussions and forums carried out by the Resource Center – Stara Zagora.

As a bottom line, we can say that, unfortunately, there is a tendency towards an increase of the number of primarily certified children with serious health problems. On the other hand, the number of children with special educational needs that have their education in a natural environment also keeps growing constantly.

CONCLUSIONS

The integrated education of children with special educational needs has still more successful realization. It is a result of the methodical work of all responsible institutions. The social significance of the problem goes beyond the limits of statistics and everyday practice. The complexity is also in creating adequate legal frame, implementation of national policy, financing, good practices, prognosis and education of the necessary experts. A wide public support for achieving including society should be sought for.

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