

SZCZEGÓLNOŚCI BADANIA POSTAWY EDUKATORÓW DO INTEGRACJI DZIECI O SPECJALNYCH POTRZEBACH EDUKACYJNYCH

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Streszczenie. Pomyślna realizacja jakiegokolwiek polityki inkluzywnej zależy, w dużej mierze, od pozytywnego nastawienia nauczycieli do tego procesu. Ostatnio opublikowano wiele prac naukowych, które wyświełają badania postawy nauczycieli wobec integracji osób niepełnosprawnych oraz włączenia dzieci o specjalnych potrzebach edukacyjnych do szkoły podstawowej. Niniejsza publikacja dokonuje analizę badań naukowych dotyczących danego problemu i analizuje wiele czynników, które mogą wpłynąć na akceptację przez nauczyciela zasady włączenia. Badania wskazują na pozytywne podejście nauczycieli do tego procesu, ale także brak podejścia do specjalnego zabezpieczenia edukacyjnego: dowodów przyjęcia pełnego włączenia lub „zerowego odrzucenia”. Zostało stwierdzono, że na postawę nauczycieli znaczny wpływ ma stopień i dotkliwość stanu niepełnosprawności (zmiennie, związane z dzieckiem) i mniej zmiennych, związanych z nauczycielem. Ponadto, zmiennie, związane ze środowiskiem edukacyjnym, takie jak wsparcie fizyczne i społeczne, uważają się bezpośrednio związane z postawą do inkluzji.

Słowa kluczowe: Integracja, inkluzja, postawa nauczyciela, edukacja inkluzywna, metody badania postawy.

PECULIARITIES OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTEGRATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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Abstract. On the assumption that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it, a great deal of research has sought to examine teachers' attitudes towards the integration and, more recently, the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school. This paper reviews this large body of research and, in so doing, explores a host of factors that might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle. The analyses showed evidence of positive attitudes, but no evidence of acceptance of a total

inclusion or “zero reject” approach to special educational provision. Teachers’ attitudes were found to be strongly influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition presented to them (child-related variables) and less by teacher-related variables. Further, educational environment-related variables, such as the availability of physical and human support, were consistently found to be associated with attitudes to inclusion.

Key words: Integration, inclusion, teacher attitudes, inclusive education, attitude measurement methods.

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ СТАВЛЕННЯ ПЕДАГОГІВ ДО ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ ДІТЕЙ З ОСОБЛИВИМИ ОСВІТНІМИ ПОТРЕБАМИ

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Анотація. Успішна реалізація будь-якої інклюзивної політики значною мірою залежить від позитивного ставлення педагогів до цього процесу. Останнім часом опубліковано багато наукових праць, де висвітлено дослідження ставлення педагогів до інтеграції осіб з інвалідністю та включення дітей з особливими освітніми потребами до основної школи. У цій публікації здійснюється аналіз наукових досліджень з проблеми і аналізується безліч факторів, які можуть вплинути на прийняття педагогом принципу включення. Дослідження свідчать про позитивне ставлення педагогів до цього процесу, але і відсутність підходу до спеціального освітнього забезпечення: доказів прийняття цілковитого включення чи «нульового відхилення». Було встановлено, що на ставлення педагогів у значній мірі впливає характер та ступінь тяжкості стану інвалідності (змінні, пов'язані з дитиною), і менше змінних, пов'язаних з учителем. Крім того, змінні, пов'язані з освітнім середовищем, такі як наявність фізичної та соціальної підтримки, вважаються безпосередньо пов'язаними зі ставленням до інклюзії.

Ключові слова: інтеграція, інклюзія, ставлення вчителя, інклюзивна освіта, методи дослідження ставлення.

Setting the problem in general and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks. Profound changes in the provision of educational, psychosocial and vocational services are increasing the integration of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities into our schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. Full acceptance of persons with disabilities by persons without disabilities will not occur, however, until subtle barriers can be eliminated. Most scholars and researchers agree that one of the factors inherent in the subtle barrier is the attitudes of health and rehabilitation professionals, teachers, employers and coworkers, educators- and counsellors-in-training, parents, peers and persons with disabilities themselves (*Beattie, J., Anderson, R., Antonak, R. 2007, 1*)

Negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities create real obstacles to the fulfillment of their roles and the attainment of their life goals. Knowledge of attitudes of persons without disabilities towards persons with disabilities helps us to understand the nature of the interaction between the two groups. Furthermore, understanding the underlying dimensions of negative attitudes may suggest differential change procedures and promote appropriate assessment of the effects of these interventions.

Estimation of the predominant attitudes of various populations concerning persons with disabilities, together with study of the interrelations of knowledge, attitudes and behavior, is necessary for suggesting desired ends to policymakers, designing intervention programmes to modify attitudes towards persons with disabilities and evaluating professional training programmes in counselling, rehabilitation and special education (*Beattie, Anderson, Antonak 2007, 14*). The usefulness of attitude research for accomplishing these goals is dependent upon the data that are obtained, and that, in turn, is dependent upon the method selected to measure attitudes.

A lot of national and foreign scientists in Pedagogy and Social Studies devoted their works to studying the problems of the integration of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities. They include Avramidis, E., Norwich, B.; Beattie, J., Anderson, R., Antonak; Jordan, A., Lindsay, L. and Stanovich, P. and others.

Formulating the purposes of the article (setting the task). Our research is aimed at discovering and studying the teachers' attitudes towards integration and inclusion. According to the purpose set research tasks are as follows: to review the foreign research discourse; to explore a host of factors that might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle; to assist those engaged in research dealing with attitudes towards persons with disabilities by presenting various attitude measurement methods.

Presenting main material. Fundamental review of the literature on the teachers' attitudes towards integration of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities was conducted by E. Avramidis and B. Norwich (*Avramidis, Norwich 2002, 129-147*). Although the movement for 'inclusive education' is part of a broad human rights agenda, many educators have serious reservations about supporting the widespread placement of pupils with special educational needs (further – SEN) in mainstream schools. Research undertaken in Australia about professional attitudes towards integration education has provided a range of information in this area. Studies covered the attitudes of headteachers, teachers, psychologists and pre-school administrators, and demonstrated that professional groups vary considerably in their perceptions of which types of children are most likely to be successfully integrated (*Ward, Center and Bochner 1994, 34*). These studies suggested that attitudes towards integration were strongly influenced by the nature of the disabilities and/or educational problems being presented and, to a lesser extent, by the professional background of the respondents. The most enthusiastic group were those responsible for pre-school provision and the most cautious group were the classroom teachers, with heads, resource teachers and psychologists in between. A similar level of caution was reflected in another Australian study involving prospective teachers (*Ward, Le Dean 1996, 212*) who, although positive towards the general philosophy of integration, differentiated between different types of needs.

Other studies have indicated that school district staff who are more distant from students, such as administrators and advisers, express more positive attitudes to

integration than those closer to the classroom context, the class teachers. Headteachers have been found to hold the most positive attitudes to integration, followed by special education teachers, with classroom teachers having the most negative attitudes (*Norwich 1994, 98*). Similarly, C. Forlin found that teachers from the Education Support Centres (special centres that cater for the educational needs of children with SEN requiring limited or extended support) were more accepting of a child with intellectual and physical disability than educators from regular mainstream primary schools which co-existed on the same site. C. Forlin concluded that special education resource teachers tend to have a more positive attitude to inclusion than their mainstream counterparts (*Forlin 1995, 183*). This difference was also reflected in a sample of Greek mainstream and special teachers (*S. Padelidou, V. Lampropoulou 2007, 175*).

I. Bowman, in her 14-nation UNESCO study of approximately 1,000 teachers with experience of teaching children with SEN, reported a wide difference in teacher opinions regarding integration. The countries surveyed were Egypt, Jordan, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Botswana, Senegal, Zambia, Australia, Thailand, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Norway and Portugal. The teachers were found to favour different types of children for integration into ordinary classes. Interestingly, I. Bowman noted that in countries which had a law requiring integration, teachers expressed more favourable views (ranging from 47 to 93 per cent). Teachers from countries which offered the most sophisticated segregated educational provision were less supportive to integration (ranging from 0 to 28 per cent) (*Bowman 1996, 33*).

Y. Leyser, G. Kapperman, R. Keller undertook a cross-cultural study of teacher attitudes towards integration in the USA, Germany, Israel, Ghana, Taiwan and the Philippines. Their findings showed that there were differences in attitude to integration between these countries (*Leyser, Kapperman, Keller 2004, 13*). Teachers in the USA and Germany had the most positive attitudes. Positive attitudes in the USA were attributed to integration being widely practiced there as the result of national educational agenda. The positive views expressed by the German teachers were seen as surprising because, at the time of the investigation, Germany had no special education legislation, their teachers were not provided with special education training, their children with SEN were educated in segregated settings and integration was being practiced only on an experimental basis. This finding goes against a simple relationship between legislative system and inclusive attitudes as Bowman's study had suggested. The authors speculated that the positive views expressed by the German teachers represented an overall sensitivity of Germans towards minorities and, thus, towards disabled people. Teacher attitudes were significantly less positive in Ghana, the Philippines, Israel and Taiwan. The authors reasoned that this could probably be due to limited or non-existent training for teachers to acquire integration competencies; the limited opportunities for integration in some of these countries; and the overall small percentage of children who receive services at all (none of these countries had a history of offering children with SEN specially designed educational opportunities).

Finally, T. Scruggs, M. Mastropieri in their meta-analysis of American attitude studies, which included 28 survey reports, reported that although two-thirds (65 per cent) of the teachers surveyed (10,560 in total) agreed with the general concept of integration, only 40 per cent believed that this was a realistic goal for most children and responses, again, appeared to vary according to disabling conditions. Another important finding was that there was no correlation between positive attitudes towards inclusion

and date of publication, suggesting that teachers' views have not substantially changed over the years (*Scruggs, Mastropieri 1996, 75*).

Research has suggested that teachers' attitudes might be influenced by a number of factors which are, in many ways, interrelated. For example, in the majority of integration attitude studies reviewed earlier, responses appeared to vary according to disabling conditions. In other words, the nature of the disabilities and/or educational problems presented have been noted to influence teachers' attitudes. These factors could be termed as 'child-related' variables. Moreover, demographic and other personality factors and their influence on teachers' attitudes have been examined and this group of variables could be classified under the heading 'teacher-related' variables. Finally, the specific context/environment has also been found to influence attitudes and these variables can be termed 'educational environment-related'. This framework of synthesizing research findings has been adopted here for the presentation of the existing literature (*Avramidis, Norwich 2002, 134*).

We continue presenting the research material with analysis of **child-related variables**. Several early integration studies have been concerned with determining teachers' attitudes towards different categories of children with SEN and their perceived suitability for integration (it is worth emphasizing here that these studies were investigating teachers' attitudes towards integration not inclusion, since the latter does not differentiate by category). Teachers' concepts of children with SEN normally consist of types of disabilities, their prevalence and the educational needs they exhibit. Generally, teachers' perceptions could be differentiated on the basis of three dimensions: physical and sensory, cognitive and behavioral-emotional.

C. Forlin found that educators were cautiously accepting of including a child with cognitive disability and were more accepting of children with physical disabilities. The degree of acceptance for part-time integration was high for children considered to have mild or moderate SEN. The majority of educators (95 per cent) believed that mild physically disabled children should be integrated part-time into mainstream classes, and only a small number of educators (6 per cent) considered full-time placement of children with severe physical disability as acceptable. Similarly, the majority of educators (86 per cent) believed that only children with mild intellectual disability should be integrated part-time into mainstream classes. A very small number of educators (1 per cent) considered full-time placement of children with intellectual disabilities viable because of their belief that it would be more stressful to cope with children with SEN full-time than part-time. C. Forlin's findings indicated that the degree of acceptance by educators for the placement of children with SEN in mainstream classes declined rapidly with a converse increase in the severity of the disability across both physical and cognitive categories, and placement should be part-time rather than full-time (*Forlin 1995, 180*).

J. Ward et al. assessed teacher attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN whose disabling conditions or educational difficulties were defined behaviourally rather than categorically. With the cooperation of senior staff from New South Wales Department of School Education, Australia, they produced a list of 30 disabling conditions which they then defined behaviourally (*Ward, Center, Bochner, 1994, 36*). They felt that this type of operational definition would have relevance for school practitioners, since traditional category grouping does not necessarily reflect the child's actual educational needs. In general, teachers in their study showed little disagreement about the inclusion of children with SEN perceived as having mild difficulties, since

they were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills from the teacher. Included in this group of children were those with mild physical and visual disabilities and mild hearing loss. There was a common uncertainty about the suitability of including children with disabling conditions that in various ways posed additional problems and demanded extra teaching competencies from teachers. Included in this group were children with mild intellectual disability, moderate hearing loss and visual disability and hyperactivity. The teachers were unanimous in their rejection of the inclusion of children with severe disabilities (regarded as being too challenging a group and, at the time of the study, normally educated in special schools). This group consisted of those with profound visual and hearing impairment and moderate intellectual disability. Children with profound sensory disabilities and low cognitive ability (mentally retarded) were considered to have a relatively poor chance of being successfully included.

In conclusion, teachers seem generally to exhibit a more positive attitude towards the integration of children with physical and sensory impairments than to those with learning difficulties and emotional-behavioral difficulties.

A great deal of research regarding teacher characteristics has sought to determine the relationship between those characteristics and attitudes towards children with special needs. Researchers have explored a host of specific **teacher variables**, such as *gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level, contact with disabled persons* and other **personality factors**, which might impact upon teacher acceptance of the inclusion principle. A synthesis of these findings is presented below.

With regard to *gender*, the evidence appears inconsistent; some researchers noted that female teachers had a greater tolerance level for integration and for special needs persons than did male teachers (*Eichinger, Rizzo and Sirotnik 1991, 123*). There was a marginal tendency for female teachers to express more positive attitudes towards the idea of integrating children with behaviour problems than male teachers.

Teaching experience is another teacher-related variable cited by several studies as having an influence on teachers' attitudes. Younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience have been found to be more supportive to integration. C. Forlin's study, for example, showed that acceptance of a child with a physical disability was highest among educators with less than six years of teaching and declined with experience for those with six to ten years of teaching. The most experienced educators (greater than 11 years of teaching) were the least accepting. C. Forlin also obtained a similar result for the integration of a child with intellectual disability. His study seemed to indicate that as educators gained experience in teaching, they became less accepting of integration (*Forlin 1995, 180*). Y. Leyser et al. also found that, in general, teachers with 14 years' or less teaching experience had a significantly higher positive score in their attitude to integration compared with those with more than 14 years. They found no significant differences in attitudes to integration among teachers whose teaching experience was between one and four years, five and nine years and ten and 14 years (no mention was made based on individual country) (*Leyser et al. 1994, 8*). Another study by D. Harvey compared the willingness of teacher trainees and primary teachers to accept children with SEN in their classes. His findings indicated that there was a clear reluctance on the part of the more experienced primary teachers compared to teacher trainees in their willingness to integrate such children (*Harvey 2005, 167*). In this respect, it would not be unreasonable to assume that newly qualified teachers hold positive attitudes towards integration when entering the

professional arena. However, although the above studies indicated that younger teachers and those with fewer years of experience are more supportive of integration, other investigators have reported that teaching experience was not significantly related to teachers' attitudes (*Avramidis et al. 2000, 202*).

The variable *grade level taught* and its influence on teachers' attitudes towards integration has been the focus of several studies. Y. Leyser et al.'s international study found that senior high school teachers displayed significantly more positive attitudes towards integration than did junior high school and elementary school teachers, and junior high school teachers were significantly more positive than elementary school teachers (again, no mention was made based on individual country) (*Leyser et al. 1994, 9*). For teachers more concerned with subject-matter, the presence of children with SEN in the class is a problem from the practical point of view of managing class activity. In this, it could be argued that primary school ethos is more holistic/inclusive, while secondary is subject-based, and that might impinge on teachers' attitudes. Although there are studies which have not found a relationship between grade and attitude, it is generally believed that an emphasis on subject-matter affiliation is less compatible with inclusion than is a focus on student development.

Experience of contact with children with SEN or disabled persons was mentioned by several studies as an important variable in shaping teacher attitudes towards integration. Here, the 'contact hypothesis' suggests that as teachers implement inclusive programmes and therefore get closer to students with significant disabilities, their attitudes might become more positive.

Another factor which has attracted considerable attention is the knowledge about children with SEN gained through formal studies during pre- and in-service *training*. This was considered an important factor in improving teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of an inclusive policy. Without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with SEN, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult.

More recently, Canadian research has identified another factor that influences not only teachers' reported attitudes towards inclusion, but their actual teaching styles and adaptations in heterogeneous classrooms; that is, their views about their responsibilities in dealing with the needs of students who are exceptional or at risk. A. Jordan, L. Lindsay and P. Stanovich found that teachers holding a 'pathognomonic' perspective, in which the teacher assumes that a disability is inherent in the individual student, differed in their teaching instruction from those closer to an 'interventionist' perspective, in which the teacher attributes student problems to an interaction between student and environment. Teachers with the most pathognomonic perspectives demonstrated the least effective interaction patterns, whereas those with interventionist perspectives engaged in many more academic interactions and persisted more in constructing student understanding (*Jordan, Lindsay and Stanovich 2007, 89*).

Attitudes towards persons with disabilities have changed over the years. Attitude measurement techniques also have changed, becoming increasingly sophisticated both theoretically and technically. In addition, a collection of ingenious methods has been suggested as alternatives to the traditional overt and obtrusive methods to measure attitudes especially when the targeted attitude referent is socially sensitive and where conscious or unconscious mechanisms may interfere and alter the respondent's attitudes (*Beattie, Anderson, Antonak, 2007, 13*).

Direct methods are by far the most widely known and used in measuring attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Opinion surveys ask respondents to express their attitudes by responding to a list of questions about the referent. A structured (closed) opinion survey asks the respondents to select one among a small set of responses, or all of those that they agree with, or those that they endorse. Unstructured surveys ask that the respondents provide not only an answer but also a justification or explanation for the answer.

To obviate the threats to the validity of attitude data, measurement experts have suggested the use of one of the *indirect attitude measurement methods*. The respondent's performance on a seemingly straightforward objective task is thought to unconsciously reveal latent psychosocial constructs that are interpreted as attitude. Indirect measurement methods can be organized into four classes: namely, those in which the respondents: (1) are unaware that they are being observed or measured (nonobtrusive behavioral observations); (2) are aware that they are being observed or measured, but are unaware of or are unclear about the purpose of the measurement situation (projective techniques); (3) are purposefully deceived as to the true purpose of the measurement situation (disguised techniques); and (4) are aware of being measured but are inactive participants in the measurement process (physiological methods) (Beattie, Anderson, Antonak, 2007, 15).

Implications and recommendations for rehabilitation practice. Our goal in writing this paper was to assist those seeking to understand attitudes towards persons with disabilities by providing information on the measurement of these attitudes. Understanding the formation, nature, structure and correlates of these attitudes must precede the development and implementation of intervention strategies designed to improve attitudes and to ultimately remove barriers to serving persons with disabilities. The final part of this paper begins with implications of the measurement of attitudes towards persons with disabilities for rehabilitation researchers. Global implications and suggestions are then directed at rehabilitation educators and practitioners. The concept of attitudes towards persons with disabilities is complex, and the measurement of these attitudes is not a simple task. Far too often researchers investigating attitudes have been responsible for perpetuating the myth that this area of research is simple and, therefore, simplistic. It is easy to create a useless instrument and to collect useless data. The investigation of attitudes towards persons with disabilities requires innovative experimental methods and psychometrically sound instruments that are reliable, valid and multidimensional. Without such instruments, it will not be possible to obtain conclusive answers to important research questions concerning the relationship between these attitudes and the acceptance and integration of persons with disabilities into society. Listed below are recommendations for the design of innovative research investigations and the development of sound attitude measurement instruments:

1. Because of the excess number of scales purporting to be valid measures of attitudes towards persons with disabilities in general (presently more than 40), and towards groups of persons with specific disabilities in particular, researchers may wish to concentrate their efforts on refining, revising, updating, and revalidating older scales rather than on developing new scales;

2. When selecting an existing direct attitude measure, researchers are advised to first consider multidimensional scales since the preponderance of empirical evidence supports the multidimensional nature of attitudes towards persons with disabilities;

3. Researchers should report, whenever possible, indices concerning the psychometric properties of the scales used (reliability, validity, item characteristics, scale characteristics), including the values reported for the original scales and the values calculated from the data in their investigation;

4. When using existing scales or adapting scales for specific research purposes, researchers should specify the attitude referent (e.g. a person with a hearing impairment, persons who are mentally retarded), as well as be clear about whether they are focusing on attitudes towards a specific group of persons with disabilities (e.g. people who are visually impaired) or the disability per se (e.g. blindness, visual impairment);

5. Because of their relative immunity from the deleterious effects of confounding and respondent sensitization, indirect attitude measurement methods are well-suited for examining attitudes towards persons with disabilities and should be given serious consideration for use by attitude researchers;

6. Because of the inconsistency in research findings on the relationship between verbal or written expressed attitudes and overt (e.g. observed) behaviors, researchers should investigate the nature of these relationships more carefully;

7. To further clarify the nature, structure and correlates of attitudes towards persons with disabilities, researchers should continue to investigate the relationships between attitude components (e.g. affective, cognitive, behavioral) and sets of sociodemographic (e.g. age, gender, educational level, profession), personality (e.g. anxiety, hostility, stress level, locus of control) and situational variables (e.g. social context, family dynamics).

Conclusion of the given research. The conclusion of this review is that the evidence regarding teacher-related variables is inconsistent and none of them alone could be regarded as a strong predictor of educator attitudes. On the other hand, there is sufficient consistency regarding educational environment-related variables, which suggests that a significant restructuring in the mainstream school environment should take place before students with significant disabilities are included. Again, it seems reasonable to conclude here that with the provision of more resources and support, teachers' attitudes could become more positive. The primary implication for practice is the setting of appropriate external support systems (and the expansion and reorganization of the existing ones) operating across schools, and the setting of learning support teams within the schools, supporting individual teachers who request guidance over a teaching concern relating to special educational needs.

Implications for rehabilitation education and training, derived from the measurement of attitudes towards persons with disabilities and from the more generic literature on attitudes towards persons with disabilities, focus mainly on assisting students and trainees to gain a deeper awareness of their attitudes towards groups of persons with disabling conditions and modification of these attitudes when necessary. Many students, upon entering the field of rehabilitation, possess only minimal awareness of their attitudes towards and actual behaviors in the presence of persons with disabilities.

These early attitudes often convey stereotypical thinking, generalization of certain characteristics and attributes to persons with similar conditions and even to all persons with disabilities, and periodically attribute unrelated special negative or positive characteristics and abilities to people who are disabled (the spread phenomenon). Early training geared towards enhancing awareness of students' and trainees' attitudes towards

persons with disabilities could dispel such notions. In a similar vein, academic institutions and related training programmes should engage in direct efforts to consciously modify students' and trainees' attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Because research generally supports the notion of attitudinal-behavioral consistency, it may be argued that fostering positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities in rehabilitation trainees could be linked to more vigorous efforts on their part (e.g. increased optimism, higher levels of motivation, more time spent on planning and providing rehabilitation services) to serve persons with disabilities.

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