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ПРОМЕНА ПАРАДИГМЕ
У ОБРАЗОВАЊУ И НАУЦИ

11. NEMZETKÖZI MÓDSZERTANI KONFERENCIA

PARADIGMAVÁLTÁS
AZ OKTATÁSBAN ÉS A TUDOMÁNYBAN

11. MEĐUNARODNA METODIČKA KONFERENCIJA

PROMENA PARADIGME
U OBRAZOVANJU I NAUCI

11TH INTERNATIONAL METHODOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

CHANGING PARADIGMS
IN EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У НОВОМ САДУ УЧИТЕЉСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ НА МАЂАРСКОМ НАСТАВНОМ ЈЕЗИКУ У СУБОТИЦИ
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SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND THE SPECIAL SCHOOL

Abstract

The aim of the special school for disadvantaged children is to prevent the development of processes that adversely affect the quality of education, the emergence of a subculture opposed to learning, and the emergence of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy (Fejes, 2014). Initially, special school-like out-of-school development programs were initiated with the support of civil or church actors. Since 2004 the organizations operating such schools have been financing the service using tender funds (Lukács, 2017). In the last twenty years, various special schools have been set up to reduce the social disadvantage of children, to provide them with experiences, to help them integrate socially, to let them succeed in their careers and to teach young people to spend their free time in a useful way. The aim of the research is to explore how and with what results the currently operating special schools help the social socialization of disadvantaged children. Interviews (N = 15) highlighted that students' motivation for life, self-confidence and experience can increase their chances of success.

Keywords: *social integration, special school, disadvantaged children, out-of-school development programs*

1. Introduction

One of the most difficult educational problems to solve today is disadvantage, followed by integration, segregation, the creation of an inclusive school atmosphere, and the application of methods appropriate to the individual characteristics of students.

Disadvantage is the focus area of academic debates, policy provisions, and practical pedagogical work. Its definition is constantly changing over time, but at every age, the discovery of the causes and the successful implementation of interventions are of paramount importance in order to ensure equal opportunities for all children at school (Varga, 2014). Young people living in deep poverty are also at risk from a socio-emotional point of view, they often develop a negative self-image, are anxious and prone to depression due to abuse and neglect. For them, the purpose of developmental work within and outside of school is to compensate for disadvantages and increase opportunities during social integration. (Béres, 2015).

The negative attitude towards education of the community around them does not help these children either. Parents' expectations of their children and their ideas about their future are also lower in these cultural circles. Coping strategies do not develop in these families either, the child does not see a model to follow in terms of knowing how to do and wanting to do it. In school, he cannot achieve a high or average performance level, and because of his failure, he feels that learning is not for him, nor does it have any value for him. His coping strategies are defensive, he falls into a state of learned helplessness. Uneducated, he has little chance of entering the labor market, falls behind financially, ends up in an increasingly poor environment, the socio-cultural disadvantage becomes permanent, and he will pass on this family pattern (Gyarmathy, 2010). It is very important that children and their families are included in programs that reduce sociocultural disadvantages at a very young age. Helping activities should be continuous, build on each other and accompany children throughout their lives.

One of the possible solutions was the establishment of schools, which provided assistance to disadvantaged children and their families in their socialization. Due to the high class sizes, nuanced differentiation is not possible during teaching within the institutional framework. The differences not

only appear in the level of subject knowledge, but also in the conception of the world, value judgment, moral perception, motivation, relationship to work and to society. During the kindergarten program, differentiation includes comprehensive personality development to be interpreted very broadly, which provides optimal personality development for everyone, taking into account their own individuality and abilities.

2. The difficulties that hinder students in school performance

In the first approach, school plays a huge role in what our social life will be like, what kind of worldview we develop, what kind of mobility we have. The knowledge acquired at school, and before that in nursery and kindergarten, later plays a very important role in where the individual is located in society, what role he plays on that particular "ladder". Where we get to and what our mobility will be do not necessarily depend on the circumstances under which the individual began socialization (Falus, 1998).

Equality can also be distinguished by observing the positions held in society, or the equality of access to a position. This equality means that we treat every member of a society as equal, we do not take into account either their origin, their place in society, their position, occupation, education, or place of residence. In a society, everyone should have an equal chance to run for a position that gives them a bigger income or better living conditions (Andorka, 2006).

The school also plays a very important role in social functions. It is especially important for children who are disadvantaged for some reason or start with some kind of disadvantage. A significant improvement in their living conditions can occur when they enter school, but this is much more difficult for children whose families have experienced some form of deviance, for example: alcoholism, drugs, abuse, suicide (Falus, 1998).

The elements of sociocultural disadvantage include parents' education, existential security, family stability, a high number of dependants, the geographical and territorial location of the place of residence, and the quality of the immediate living environment. In Hungary, due to the ethnic situation of the minority, belonging to the Gypsy community means a disadvantage. In many cases, these factors hinder children's intellectual development, and they do not receive the necessary foundations for school compliance. This hinders the child's successful integration and school performance. The disadvantage is mainly caused by cultural backwardness and the resulting lack of knowledge and vocabulary. Due to the poor financial situation, it is not possible to buy tools for the children that help their development, and poor nutrition can also set them back in their mental development. The value system of disadvantaged families is also different, learning and knowledge are not valuable (Gyarmathy, 2010).

During an empirical research conducted in 2014, the perception of learning by third and fourth grade children was presented. Most of the interviewed children were not motivated towards learning activities. Gypsy children like to go to school, but not to study, so they do not achieve good results. By the concept of learning, they only understand the acquisition of knowledge within the walls of the school, while those students whose parents value the acquisition of knowledge, include visiting museums, visiting the theater, and going to the library as learning (Bencéné, 2016).

Parents' expectations of their children and their ideas about their future are also lower in these cultural circles. Coping strategies do not develop in these families either, the child does not see a model to follow in terms of knowing how to do and wanting to do it. He is unable to achieve a high or average performance level at school, and because of his lack of success, he feels that learning is not for him, nor is it of value to him. His coping strategies are defensive, he falls into a state of learned helplessness. Uneducated, he has little chance of entering the labor market, falls behind financially, finds himself in an increasingly poor environment, the socio-cultural disadvantage becomes permanent, he will pass on this family pattern (Gyarmathy, 2010).

3. The special school

The special school is an after-school support program in English, or an extracurricular afternoon school, which operates in addition to compulsory school lessons, in the afternoon or on weekends with the voluntary participation of students (REF, 2009).

In Hungary, the first school programs started in the mid-1990s, they were created at the initiative of civil organizations with the aim of creating opportunities and catching up. The special school is an institution where children are from a cumulatively disadvantaged situation, who are in a difficult

situation due to discrimination, develop, catch up, and nurture talents within the framework of extracurricular activities. The system supports students' success at school, helps them choose a career, socialize and assert themselves (Németh, 2008).

The aim of the special school is to avoid the formation of mechanisms that negatively influence the quality of education, and the subculture that opposes learning. In addition to the compulsory school sessions, the special schools operate in the afternoons or on weekends, with the voluntary participation of the students. An essential feature of the activities is a complex pedagogical approach that flexibly adapts to the characteristics of the target group. This makes it possible to utilize opportunities that are much more difficult to realize in public education. The teacher-student relationship also differs from the usual school relationship, it is much more personal and direct. With leisure and community development programs, the school helps students develop their identity and integrate into society (Fejes, 2014).

According to György Kerényi (2015), the special school is an institution that, within the framework of extra-curricular activities, aims to promote the school success and career motivation of students with a cumulatively disadvantaged situation, especially the Roma who are in an even more difficult situation due to discrimination, and improves their chances to assert themselves in the labor market and social integration. (Kerényi, 2005: 15).

The special school is an inclusive extracurricular activity system that contributes to ensuring equality of opportunity for disadvantaged children within the framework of out-of-school, afternoon, weekend or winter and summer holiday programs. The target group is primary and secondary public education, helping and mentoring students from different social strata, belonging to different cultural backgrounds, and students with individual talents attending institutions. The goal is for them to progress successfully in their studies and thereby achieve their social mobility. Kindergarten programs are now very diverse, but they have in common is that they are based on the approach of inclusive education and strive to provide children with a sense of success. The goals also differ depending on local needs and the composition of children's groups. In one system, the focus was on talent management, while in the other, they tried to provide diverse, extracurricular programs and opportunities to gain knowledge for disadvantaged students (Polyacskó, 2019).

According to Szilvia Németh (2008), the most important goal of the school is to reduce the disadvantages arising from the family background and social situation, and to contribute to the success of the student in his studies and to achieve his realistic goal which corresponds to his individual abilities. During her research, she examined several schools, focusing on their operation and target system. She distinguished three types of special school. She identified a school whose offer is huge and includes a lot of programs for children, all of which help socialization and learning. These tutors can help students until they complete their secondary school studies. Secondly, she pointed out a school where the majority of children live in very difficult conditions, are disadvantaged, and have lower than average abilities. In the case of this type of institution, the primary task is to reduce social disadvantages. The purpose of the third type of school is to support children who, based on their social situation, are classified as disadvantaged and who perform outstandingly in some area of talent, but their parental background does not allow for talent nurturing. In this case, the aim of the school is talent management (Németh, 2008).

According to György Kerényi (2005), in order to bring knowledge to a higher level, education must be done differently. Instead of the old structures, it is more necessary to encourage students to be open, independent, and creative due to the new, diverse labor market of today and other reasons, thus improving their social integration and later their placement in the world of work. It would be more important to focus on problem solving, to concentrate on applying what you have learned in an unknown situation. However, the special school cannot be an imitation of the school, this institution is only a partner, or, so to speak, an addition, which contributes to the success of the student at school, or helps the student coming from a disadvantaged, rural or poorer region. Students are supported with programs and academically in such a way that it all benefits them and helps them succeed in school. Perhaps the "most important" goal is to remove disadvantaged students from the home environment and reduce their disadvantages caused by socialization. The students' traditions brought from home should be respected, on the basis of which they should be helped in their studies, socialization and catching up. What is important for the student is the support of family values and not the formation of other norms.

According to Kerényi (2005), special schools are most important for disadvantaged students, but in today's world organizations operating in many different ways have been created, as shown by the results of the following research.

4. The research

The world of special schools is very interesting, as special schools operating on different principles have been formed over the years. One of them deals with embracing, educating and supporting the social integration of disadvantaged young people, while the other part of the special schools is paid, and their aim is primarily to achieve the best performance in school and nurture talent.

The primary goal of the current empirical research was to reveal what types of schools exist, how they function, and how they were formed. The method of the research is a structured interview, which was conducted on the basis of a preliminary interview outline consisting of 20 questions in the 2020-21 academic year, during a personal or online platform meeting with 15 classroom leaders or teachers working in classrooms. Most of the questions were open-ended, the goal in all respects was not to influence the respondent's opinion. Our research questions focused on the need for teachers in today's world, what methods should be used to support children's learning. What motivational tools they use, how their day goes, and how the students feel here, how successful they are in achieving the set goal. How do you keep in touch with parents? How is your teaching different from school? What sources are used to provide care for the children, the implementation of the programs, and the salaries of the teachers. In the course of our research we also examined the differences between schools that provide assistance to disadvantaged students, that are funded by the state, where the majority of children are of Roma origin and have learning difficulties, and schools that operate as individual businesses, which are funded by the parents, where mostly the children are good students and the main goal is to complete homework, recite lessons, and prepare excellently for papers.

5. The results of the research

In the course of the research, we interviewed 15 directors and mentors of special schools. In each place, the head teacher also has a pedagogue degree, the number of employees in the school varies from 3 to 15-80 depending on the number of children and the type of school. The number of children in schools dealing with disadvantaged children is between 10 and 25, and in private day-care schools 8-12. Children attend art schools twice a week, and the number of young people participating in talent management varies between 40 and 80 people. The sessions are held individually and in small groups.

The qualifications of the mentors vary, but in addition to the leader, every special school has at least two helpers with teacher qualifications. There is a helper with a degree in the social field in special schools dealing with underprivileged children, and a specialist with a background in family support and guardianship. The work of the full-time mentors is also supported by volunteers, mainly retired teachers. In talent training special schools, the work of teachers is supported by recognized artists. A specialist with an economic degree or a history of tender writing is nowhere to be found, despite the fact that tenders play an important role in maintenance.

All examined special school have more than 5 years of professional experience. All 4 (27%) of the art schools and 2 (13%) daycare special schools are located in cities. Of the special schools dealing with disadvantaged children, 4 (27%) are located in cities, 5 (33%) are located in smaller settlements or in their centers.

In terms of the type of special schools, 8 (53%) of the ones we surveyed deal with underprivileged children aged 6-14, mostly gypsies, of which 5 (33%) receive students on weekday afternoons, while 3 (20%) help with the socialization process on weekends, primarily with extracurricular programs, but learning support also plays an important role. In this case, the children go to schools further away from the settlement.

Of the examined special schools, 2 (13%) are privately funded daycare centers, which means that parents pay a daily fee for the service. The children come to the afternoon sessions during the week after school. This program works similarly to daycare, focusing mainly on learning and completing homework.

One civil organisation makes a special school-type program (7%), which primarily organizes overnight weekend and holiday programs for permanent members, the primary goal of which is to support social integration.

4 (27%) of the special schools surveyed bear the name special school, but according to the definitions presented above, they are not special schools, but artistic talent management programs that exclusively nurture talent in one area: 2 (13%) theater schools, one (7%) fine arts school and 1 (7%) dance art school. The number of students in art schools is higher, and the range of participants in talent management is also wider in terms of age group, because they work with the 6-23 year old age group individually or in age groups.

Starting from the 1990s, the special schools were primarily dependent on donations, and after the 2003 legitimization, when they were named in the Public Education Act, they operated primarily from grant funds. At that time, some of the special schools functioned only during the tender period (Fejes és Szűcs, 2016).

In terms of financing, the special schools that we interviewed dealing with disadvantaged children mainly secured the necessary financial resources from grant funding in the initial period, which meant that continuity and security could not be counted on in all cases. Currently, these special schools operate on domestic budget resources and grant funding. Day care schools operating as individual businesses have independent financial resources, which are represented by a monthly fee paid by parents, which consists of two parts. It includes the fee for the afternoon sessions, and there is a separate payment for meals and off-site leisure activities if present.

The special school-type program provides the camps with grant funds, while the weekend programs are supported by businesses and grants collected within the framework of foundations.

The art schools are supported by foundation funds and the monthly tuition paid by the parents, which is supplemented by special costs for competitions, which are also provided by the parents. However, a scholarship was created for underprivileged artistic talent, which is provided by donations from donors or from 1% of the tax paid by supporters.

We asked what, based on the opinion of the leaders and mentors, the special school is and what its main purpose is, as well as what role parents have in the daily life of the school. There was a significant difference between the answers depending on the type of the special school.

The art school provides sessions at least twice a week, or even more, with the participation of excellent professionals and artists for young talents aged 6-23. Its primary goal is high-quality development activities taking into account individual characteristics in a talent field, in a given art form. Parents have a supporting role, they provide the children with appropriate costumes and performance clothes. They can gain an insight into the school's activities once per semester at the presentations for them, and they can participate as spectators in the external performances.

According to the leaders of the special schools operating within the framework of a private enterprise, the special school is a quality daycare center, the primary purpose of which is quality learning, the preparation of school homework, supplementing the curriculum, and practice. The infrastructure is of an exceptionally high standard, the location is located in a private house, where an aesthetic learning environment has been created. The emphasis is on thorough oral and written preparation, naturally using playful methods to make the students feel good. In addition to learning individual learning strategies and solving tasks, there is also time to play. An important goal is to provide children with professional learning assistance and relieve parents from learning with their children. The parents expect that the child should feel good in such a place, and that his grades should improve significantly and that he should improve according to his abilities. In addition to studying, they also organize talent development and leisure programs during the remaining time. The parents do not participate in the day-to-day activities, but they demand regular information about the children's academic work. However, on some occasions, they also organize community-building and leisure programs for children and parents, mainly related to the holidays.

In the case of special schools created for disadvantaged children, according to the leader, the children's second home is the school, a safe place where they can always count on mentors and feel safe in their joys and sorrows. The primary goal is the development of social competence and the reduction of disadvantages that represent a social gap. Learning is also important, of course, but there is a greater emphasis on the students being members of a so-called "big family", where they can create relationships, in addition to catching up on their studies and achieving better results. In this special school, the goal is to help break out of a disadvantaged situation, shape the child's worldview, and create a realistic future plan by helping them continue their education. The mode of operation is flexible, the program was designed taking into account the students' characteristics, the policy and operating regulations were

created as a result of the joint agreement of the children, parents and mentors, taking into account the goals. According to Nóra L. Ritók (2016), during the joint development of the rules, the students will be able to learn the roles, take responsibility and live in a community, obeying the rules. In this case, it is no longer the mandatory but rather motivation is what disciplines. The relationship between mentors and students is also a partnership that operates according to clear rules.

The special school does not provide tutoring, but a complex pedagogic development activity, which encourages students to work independently, take responsibility, and develop their own goals with the help of the most up-to-date methods. In the course of learning, after the preliminary individual assessments, individual development takes place, during which the development of basic skills, text comprehension, writing, reading and calculation skills with the help of playful methods plays a prominent role.

The community-building programs and personality development, which take place within the framework of personality development and team-building trainings with the help of play pedagogy, drama pedagogy, and bibliotherapy sessions, are of great importance. A great emphasis is placed everywhere on the evaluation of individual performance, for which reward systems have been jointly developed, which encourages the majority of students to perform better and to actively participate in the programs. During weekdays, special attention is also paid to the acquisition of life skills, for which summer camps also provide excellent opportunities to practice. The focus of the activities is on the development of basic skills and motivation.

Special school is an extracurricular program, it includes all activities that supplement the basic activities at school (Vámos, 2016). The special schools we interviewed also organize a number of additional programs for students. They regularly go to museums, exhibitions, visitor centers, theatres, cinemas and nature trips. All these programs also serve as places for learning, as they always try to organize outdoor programs in connection with the curriculum, which are a particularly great experience for children. Personal learning together and playful methods also strengthen learning competencies. The variety of unusual learning situations also strengthens the motivation to learn (Csovcsis, 2016).

According to Erika Csovcsis (2016), the first trip of special school mentors leads to the families, to find the main allies, to see the relationships and bonds. The parents of the children attending the special schools interviewed during our research have a low level of education, but the mentors put a lot of emphasis on being open to the parents and supporting them in raising their children. The relationship between mentors and families is organized and differentiated taking into account the families' situation. During a family visit at the time of enrolment, the mentors get to know the living conditions at home and the situation of the families and hold a round table discussion once a month, where they try to develop a positive attitude for the parents towards learning at school. Parents are also often invited to leisure and community-building activities in order to support them in raising their children with positive reinforcement and experiences. They can also be active participants in leisure programs, in such a way that they can take on independent tasks in the organization and implementation, of course with the support of mentors.

In the case of weekend special schools, the primary goal is to support social integration. They place great emphasis on the development of a healthy lifestyle, the assessment of individual characteristics, the acquisition of effective individual learning strategies, and parenting advice for parents. They provide diverse leisure programs for children and families, run a handicraft workshop and a household management group. They make it possible to visit theater and museum programs, and they also organize trips to more distant locations. Some of the programs are only for young people, but families can also participate in many events.

The special school-type programs provide mid-year and holiday boarding programs for lower school children, usually for 10-15 people, the main goal of which is to reduce social disadvantages. A permanent group belongs to this community, for whom they try to provide clothes, food and school equipment during the year, mainly with the support of donating individuals, businesses and companies. The student's academic results are constantly monitored by the volunteer mentors, they meet the students occasionally and provide them with advice. On the occasion of the boarding events, mainly personality development, community building, and social integration programs are organized in addition to programs providing leisure time experiences.

6. Summary

In our country there have not yet been detailed, comprehensive analyses of the impact of schools on young people and the effectiveness of institutions, but it can be assumed that school programs also have an impact on non-cognitive areas in the development of students from disadvantaged families. They indirectly contribute to overcoming school difficulties and social integration. The school-related programs help develop a positive attitude related to the school's culture, the development of school-oriented attitudes, which reduces dropout rates (Vámos, 2016).

In the schools we visited, the directors and mentors consider the operation to be effective. The teachers dealing with underprivileged children think that this is a second chance for the students, if they did not have the opportunity to participate in the program, they would drop out of school and be pushed to the fringes of society, they would start their adult lives without a chance. The leaders of the art schools believe that this is the only way children can receive the highest quality development related to their area of talent.

The teachers said that special school differs from school mainly in that the development of children is taken into account in accordance with the specific, individual abilities of the students, and the development with playful methods is adapted to this. Of course, students with lower abilities are not expected to achieve an excellent certificate, but to realize their own realistic goals set with the help of a mentor. As a result of the development work, the students will be more motivated, either in terms of their talent area or in terms of learning and self-development. They are more active and independent in creating and realizing their own goals.

In the case of each special school, the answer to the question of whether the students like going to school was a resounding yes, which is also due to the fact that the students can participate in the shaping of their own lives and the realization of their goals. The effectiveness is also due to the fact that the teacher-student relationship in the special schools differs from the traditional subordinate-superior relationship in schools, and a supportive relationship based on partnership develops. Each special school places great emphasis on the development of a close relationship between students and peers, they believe that the "special school students" always stick together, protect each other, and do not let the other down, no matter what.

Our research results show that there is a need for special schools in today's world, because only they can use playful methods and individual development to help the school and social chances of disadvantaged children, and high-quality development for the talented. They can increase students' motivation and independent responsibility with playful and varied learning methods based on activities and independent work. In order to improve learning results, it is not enough to focus only on learning, but the positive impact of personality development, community-building, and leisure programs on the development of cognitive abilities also plays an outstanding role.

The main motivational tool is the application of learning methods based on individual experience: drama pedagogy, outdoor methods, learning through games and board games, as well as consciously designed individual performance evaluation or even gamification-based systems.

In all special schools, with the exception of the art schools, the agenda, the establishment of rules, and the undertaking of tasks are based on mutual agreement, taking individual characteristics into account. Special schools differ from schools in every case, because they do not apply the Prussian, frontal, authoritarian system of the school, which is based on knowledge-centered expectations (L. Ritók, 2016). The special schools we met during our research consider children as independent individuals, treat their characteristics as valuable, and accordingly try to provide them with support so that they have equal opportunities to start in society and become happy adults. In the spirit of Mária Montessori's thoughts: "*Help me do it myself!"*

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