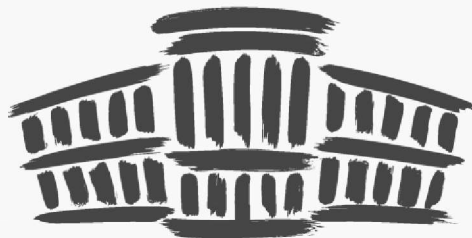


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## 11. МЕЂУНАРОДНА МЕТОДИЧКА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА

ПРОМЕНА ПАРАДИГМЕ  
У ОБРАЗОВАЊУ И НАУЦИ

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## 11<sup>TH</sup> 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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## LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION CONCEPTS IN INCLUSION

### *Abstract*

The concepts of special needs education have changed throughout history. In many cases they have represented ideas of social development. On the other hand, they have reflected the increasingly positive attitudes in society towards the inclusion of people with disabilities. Concepts have also been constantly updated in the field of education. This is reflected in studies, research, conferences and teacher training. Today, however, we are living in an age of inclusion, and several players are essential to this process. Conceptual changes are not so clearly visible to the majority of teachers today. Many misunderstandings could be avoided if definitions were clarified and correctly understood. One of the most important factors in the process of co-education in my research is to have a clear understanding of the meaning of the terms used in the field of special education. After all, it is impossible to incorporate the suggestions and characterisations in expert opinions into the teaching process if we do not know how to interpret the definitions they contain. The special needs teacher helps in the process of co-education and advises mainstream teachers, providing individualised development for children with special educational needs. But she can do all this in a few hours a week, which means that most of her time is spent with the teachers, not the children. Knowledge of the specificities of children with special educational needs is also necessary in order to be able to properly integrate the proposed equities in the daily teaching and educational processes. The use of the wrong method or inappropriate discipline patterns can lead to serious problems. It is now essential to address this issue. The growing number of children with learning difficulties in schools, whose education can no longer be ignored and left to special needs teachers. Today's majority of teachers must be prepared for this. In addition to awareness-raising, there is a need for basic special education knowledge to facilitate the success of co-education. The acquisition of competences should also be included in higher education courses. My research focuses on co-education, one element of which I highlight in this study. It shows that the lack of concepts of special education is present and complicates the daily work of teachers. I used a questionnaire survey in my research, involving nearly 400 practicing teachers and 180 graduate student teachers. In addition to open-ended, closed-ended and attitudinal questions, I left all of them open to other response options. This gave me the opportunity to gather a large number of my own thoughts, opinions and experiences on the topic in several areas

**Keywords:** *inclusion, concepts, special needs education, teaching, school, disability, co-education*

### **1. Changes in concepts over the years**

The concept of special needs education was first used in the German-speaking world in the 19th and 20th centuries, in a wide variety of interpretations. The multifaceted approach originated from the fact that it included both a pedagogical and a medical-pedagogical approach (Gordosné, 2004). At the beginning of her work, Maria Montessori was the first to integrate elements of medical pedagogy into her specific pedagogical system. In Hungary, in the 1880s, Frim Jakab introduced the concept of medical pedagogy. He was the first to found a medical education institute for the disabled in Rákospalota. He believed that 'remedial education' could achieve results with handicapped children. His partner was Adolf Szenes, who called remedial education a branch of pedagogy. He defined it as a new line of pedagogy. This started the question of acceptance and schooling of children with disabilities, for which

disability categories had to be defined. All this had to be put into a system that could be interpreted and used in public education, i.e. it had to be made 'school-centred' (Gordosné, 2004). In 1933 Zoltán Tóth called persons in need of remedial education as persons with reduced values (Tóth, 1933). In developing his typology he started from the notion of abnormal-normal. A different typology was established by Vértes in 1940. He sets up his own groups from a different point of view, based on physical and mental health which differs from the norm.

In the second half of the 20th century, disability emerged in Hungary as a complex rehabilitation activity, a special form of pedagogical activity. In 1982 Gordosné was already treating special education as a slowly emerging, complex, interdisciplinary science. It is a science in both a narrow and a broad sense. And these categories, with minor changes, are still present in the science. In a narrow sense, it is the science of education of those who need special educational needs. In a broader sense, it refers to the whole phenomenon of persons with special educational needs. It is a broad and multi-factorial phenomenon, and several different branches have developed: anthropology of special needs education, pathophysiology, psychology, sociology.

The fight against discrimination has had a strong impact on the use of the concept of population, with the continuing development of special needs education and the strengthening of equal rights. The diagnoses that have emerged over the years have become adjectives, offensive and insulting. It was realised that, at the same time, the names of institutions were also discriminatory: e.g. the School for the Dumb, the Budapest Institute for the Stupid and the Feeble-minded, the School for the Disabled. These names were gradually changed (Gordosné, 2004).

### *1.1. A Emergence of the concepts of integration/inclusion*

The term inclusion first emerged as a political concept, a socio-political concept. It emerged as a social policy objective. The Salamanca Declaration was the first to use the concept of inclusion in a pedagogical sense (Csányi and Zsoldos, 2004). From the point of view of schooling, the definition of the group of people in need of special education is linked to the level of differentiation of special education institutions and schools in the country concerned, and to the relationship of the majority schools in the country concerned to children with special needs. Whether the school can adapt to the different abilities, performance and behaviour of these children, whether it can ensure that their special educational needs are met in the mainstream school or whether it directs them to a segregated school system. In this categorisation, the educational solution is not sought for the children's needs, but the children who fit into the existing school system are placed in it and those who do not are excluded.

At the beginning of the development of special needs education in the 19th century, children with special educational needs were classified according to their disabilities, the type of illness and their severity, following the medical-clinical model. The starting point and yardstick was the healthy, normal, average child. It was assumed that there was a sharp boundary between healthy and not healthy, normal and abnormal. The primary school was to educate only healthy, average children. Special schools for gifted children were also established in several countries because the term 'exceptional child' was used to define children with special educational needs. More commonly, however, the term is used to refer to those who are negatively different from the average. Special education was thought to be adapted to special problems and thus to enable the child to integrate more fully. Segregated institutions used separate textbooks and resources. The boundaries were very sharp between disabled and non-disabled pupils. This in turn relieved teachers in mainstream schools of the burden of differentiating methods. This line of thinking worked worldwide for quite a long time. However, more and more errors and counter-arguments came to the fore. Every child is different and individual, with specific qualities and abilities. Even when the disabled are singled out, the majority school is not completely homogeneous. There are those who are lagging behind and those who are outperforming. All this is often due to difficulties caused by causes beyond their control. The principle of inclusion says that the cause of failure should be sought not so much in the child as in the environment. The emphasis has started to shift from the medical model to the pedagogical-social model. The focus has shifted from looking for faults and barriers in the child to identifying barriers in the environment. It is no longer a question of "what is wrong with you?" but "what do you need to get better?" The principle is no longer that segregation prepares a child for integration into society, but that school integration means that the child is already part of society. What cannot be left out of all this is that the concept of disability is being replaced by special educational needs. The Warnock report was the first to formulate this. The aim of

the concept is to bring the categories together and to draw attention not to the deficits but to the educational needs. On the other hand, it also goes beyond the existing groups. It includes those who have more general learning difficulties and also the learning difficulties associated with exceptionally gifted children. The problems appear to be due not only to organic causes but also to social and emotional causes (Csányi-Perlusz, 2001).

Later, in the USA and Europe, the concept was extended.(Tóth, 1933) It has been defined as co-education with able-bodied peers. Inclusion first appeared as a social policy concept. Its social policy aim was to prevent segregation/separation. The Salamanca Theses were the first to use the concept of inclusion from a pedagogical point of view, with the substantive aim of developing an inclusive approach (Csányi-Zsoldos, 1994). The terminology was based on school reform and was entirely linked to education.

The difference between the concepts of inclusion and integration is not understood in many areas, and the reason for this can be traced back to the very beginning. The point is that the two words are not synonymous. The vast majority of documents are in English, which is linked to the spread of the concepts. The difference in translations has been the main source of confusion as to which country has interpreted the meaning of the word. In French, Spanish and German, the term integration has become widespread, in Britain both terms are used. In the USA it has also taken on a whole new meaning. There, inclusion means the education of people with disabilities at the same age as their peers.

So pupils can learn with able-bodied or disabled peers, but the important thing is that they learn with people of the same age. In addition, several concepts have been introduced which have made interpretation more difficult. The principle of "least restrictive environment", the mainstreaming terms that confused, also made the development of precise definitions unclear. There were two principles in the US that were in constant battle with each other. The 'maximum residentialisation' and the 'least restrictive environment'. However, both were difficult to define in the law, which is why a new concept, inclusion, was introduced as a definition, an official concept. This meant that a disabled child in a mainstream school should be provided with all the necessary means to develop.

Following the example of foreign countries, the concept was also approached in Hungary in a multifaceted way. In defining it, we can start from the fact that in the process, several separate parts are integrated into a larger whole, a unity, merging, becoming unified (Juhász, 1989). In Réthy's (2002) formulation, the pedagogical aspects are more prominent: integration in education and pedagogy means the co-education, education and training of disabled and normal individuals in a common living and learning space, and in addition, it creates optimal development opportunities for all (Réthy, 2002).

EU resolutions have placed greater emphasis on social inclusion, i.e. they call for children with special educational needs not to be unfairly discriminated against and excluded from society. Integrated education in public education is seen as a means of creating opportunities and reducing inequalities (Mesterházi, 2002). From this perspective, integration generally means that children and young people with disabilities, i.e. SNI, are included and integrated among their healthy peers. In Földes' (2003) definition, the difference between integration and inclusion is already noticeable: integrated education is when the school accepts the child with special needs, but does not change its functioning or the teacher does not take real responsibility for it. In reception, the institution actually expects the child to integrate (Földes, 2003).

Different stages and variants of integrated education have emerged, the most important of which, according to Yvonne Csányi (1993), are the following basic concepts. The most common form of integration is physical, physical and social integration. Special education is the responsibility of the special needs teacher. In the case of inclusion, on the other hand, the host school is fully prepared to receive SNI pupils, so the school's life, values, methods, staff and facilities are designed to take maximum account of the children's needs. Individual differentiation is of the utmost importance, with maximum adaptation to the specific needs and requirements of each child. The teacher will be a cooperative and supportive partner of the special needs teacher, ideally even within a single lesson. Basically, we are looking at a completely different approach to teaching. According to Sebba (1996), the difference is:..... "with integration, individuals or small groups of children are sought to be included in the existing structures of the school, whereas with inclusion, the organisational framework for implementing the curriculum is rethought....." Hall, on the other hand, emphasises (1992) that, in addition to development, it is really social inclusion of the pupil by the institution, the children, the adult community and this is the fight against discrimination. In Hungary, the history is similar to that of

foreign countries. We know it is in the public consciousness, teachers are aware of the possibilities. But the practice is still not popular, there are few inclusive schools (Csányi-Perlusz, 2001).

There is also a difference in perspective between the concepts of integration and inclusion. Integration is understood from the perspective of the individual, whereas inclusion is understood from the perspective of the system. Integration is the intention of the child and the parent, while inclusion is the norm accepted by the majority and its content expands with social change. Increasingly, the term co-education is used instead of the two words. The aim of which is to focus on the differences rather than the differences and to bridge the gap between the two processes.

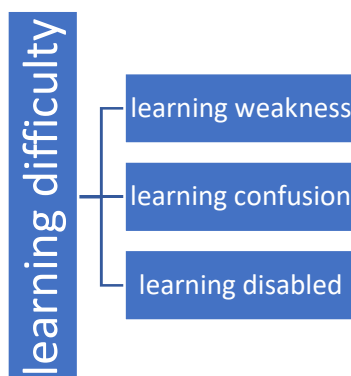
### 1.2. A Specific educational needs

The use of the word 'disability' in the field of public education in Hungary has been replaced by the term 'child or pupil with special educational needs', which was first introduced by Act LXXIX of 1993 on public education, as amended several times. Definition of special educational needs according to the Public Education Act (Act LXXIX of 1993):

§ 121 (1) For the purposes of this Act, a child or pupil with special educational needs is a child or pupil who, on the basis of the expert opinion of the expert and rehabilitation committee

a) physically, sensorially, mentally, speech impaired, autistic, or, in the case of a combination of several disabilities, with multiple disabilities,

(b) is permanently and severely handicapped in his or her education and learning because of a mental disorder (e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, mutism, pathological hyperkinetic or pathological activity disorder); The SNI legislation has been amended several times since the 1990s. In the 1993 Public Education Act, emphasis was placed on differentiated education for children with disabilities, adapted to their abilities, and amendments to the Act in 1996 and 1999 gave additional rights to children with integration, learning difficulties and behavioural disorders. It was only after the 2003 amendment of the Public Education Act that the term SNI started to be used, breaking with the term 'handicapped' in the field of education. In 2005, the Ministry of Education clarified the definition of SNI, and in 2007, an official distinction was made between special educational needs that are organic and those that are not. (Vargáné, 2004) Children with SNI differ from their able-bodied peers in some ways, which requires special attention. Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education defines a child with a disability as a child with special needs. In this sense, the word disability refers to an unfavourable modification of some characteristic. The Act in force since 1 September 2012 has fundamentally changed the Hungarian public education system. The law stipulates that remedial education is only available to public education institutions for pupils with SNI, based on the decision of an expert committee. Children may choose between integrated or segregated schooling, on the basis of the opinion of the expert committee. When we talk about integrated public education for pupils with disabilities, in my opinion, a distinction should be made between the provision for children with special educational needs due to physical and sensory disabilities and the provision for children with intellectual disabilities. These two concepts are often lost in practice. In many cases, there is no distinction between pupils with disabilities and pupils with special needs.



**1.figure** Learning difficulties (self-made)

Source: own edit, Mesterházi, Szekeres (2019): *A nehezen tanuló gyermek iskolai nevelése*

In Hungary, the concept of a child or pupil requiring special attention and special treatment is introduced, and the definition of a child or pupil with special educational needs is redefined. In addition to the classic categories of disability, the definition reintroduces the term "other mental development disorder", which was already included in the definition of pupils with special educational needs from 2003 to 2007. Thus, the current definition is: "A pupil with special educational needs is a child or pupil with special educational needs who, according to the expert opinion of an expert committee, has a motor, sensory, intellectual or speech disability, a multiple disability, an autism spectrum disorder or other mental disability (severe learning disability, attention deficit or behavioural disorder)." (Act CXC of 2011)

Children and pupils with integration, learning and behavioural difficulties require special treatment but are not special educational needs.

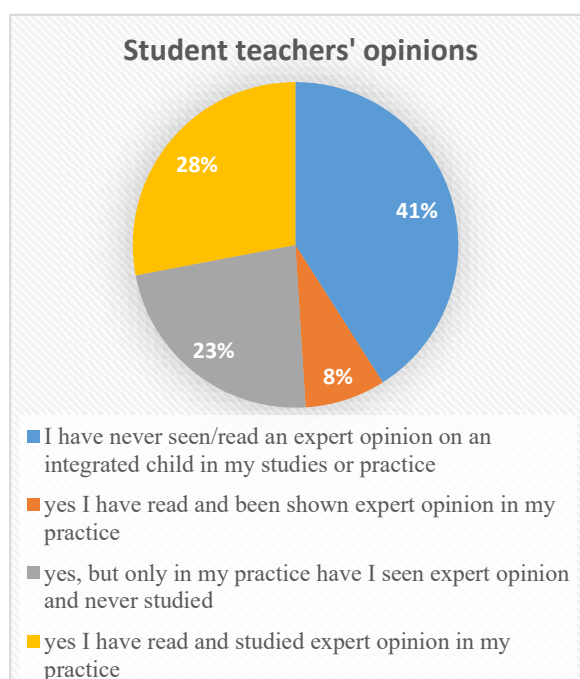
Children with special educational needs require a different level of support from the others, special care or additional educational services. The different types of disability have different needs, the pedagogical consequences of which can be broken down on an individual basis. The 2011 Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education amended the part concerning the categories of SNI as follows:

§ 12 Children and pupils with special needs:

- a) child, pupil with special needs:
  - aa) child, pupil with special educational needs,
  - ab) child or pupil with special educational needs,
  - ac) a child or pupil with special educational needs,
- b) a child or pupil who is disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged according to the Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration,

## 2. Research

Nearly 700 teachers and student teachers participated in my research. I used two different questionnaires for the majority of teachers and students, targeting only lower secondary teachers. The reason for this is that they are the ones who start the children on their learning journey and set them on their first steps. In the questionnaire I used both open-ended closed and attitudinal questions and always gave the opportunity to express other opinions. I was also able to gather a lot of information from the comments, with many people commenting on specific questions. I sent out the questionnaires to all public primary schools and church schools in the country and received results back from all counties. From my research, I can say that there is a lack of competence in special education and that teachers feel and acknowledge this. In Hungary, remedial education support is mainly focused on children with special educational needs, with little support for inclusive teachers (Moha,2020)



The success of the process of co-education can only be achieved if we understand what is happening during this process. And a prerequisite for this is to know the diagnosed areas of learning problems. Knowledge of learning problems would be necessary to understand one of the most important documents in co-education, the expert opinion. 41% of the students surveyed said that they had neither encountered nor read an expert opinion during their placements or studies. Only 28% have read and studied it and, more significantly, 23% have only encountered it in practice. It should be a basic task in teaching practice to know and be able to use expert opinion. After all, it is the starting point, the first step, which determines the direction in which the teaching process should be taken, and can provide information which greatly helps the pedagogical work.

2. figure. Student teachers' opinions (own production)

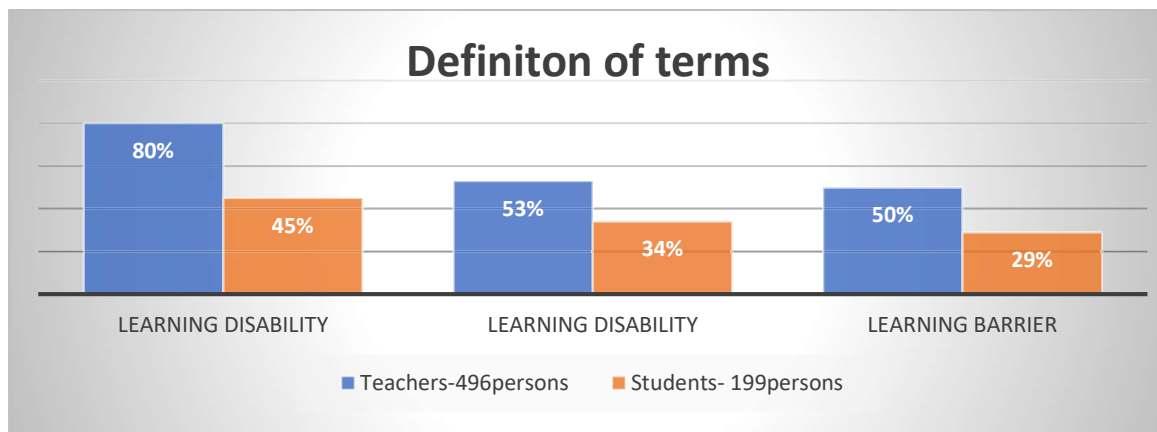
The second most important would be to distinguish learning problem areas from each other and to have a basic knowledge of them in order to plan teaching processes. From the end of the 20th century, learning difficulties are newly classified into three types. All these can be found in a university textbook by Mesterházi and Szekeres (2019). The systematisation of the concepts appears in a different way than before. Learning disability is currently a generic term and has three different forms: learning failure/weakness, learning disability, learning disabilities. In all of these, I have produced a brief summary in which the differences along the variables can be clearly delineated. The types of learning disability can be compared and delimited according to the following variables: - symptoms, most common cause, prevalence, prevention/help, expected learning outcomes

|            | <div> <div>Learning difficulty</div> <div> <div>↙</div> <div>↓</div> <div>↘</div> </div> </div>  |  |  |
|------------|--|--|--|
|            | Learning disability / weakness   | Learning confusion   | Learning disabilities  |
| symptom    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-difficult to master cultural techniques</li> <li>-inefficiency</li> <li>-weak performance</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in some areas of learning, especially in reading, writing and mathematics - where the child's ineffectiveness is striking</li> <li>-motivational/behavioural problems in the subjects</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are generalised and persistent in all areas of learning</li> <li>-distinctive cognitive functions, slow development of speech, dyspraxia, concentration of attention, slow task performance</li> <li>-social learning difficulties manifested by behavioural problems</li> </ul> |
| cause of   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-prolonged illness</li> <li>-too many absences</li> <li>-frequent changes of school</li> <li>-adverse social environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-underdevelopment/immaturity of psychic functions due to early onset neurorelated/neuropsychological causes</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-minor central nervous system damage</li> <li>-slow neurological maturation due to a persistently adverse social environment</li> </ul>   |
| assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-differentiated development</li> <li>-parents- teachers working together</li> <li>-monitoring school results</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-early detection</li> <li>-development sessions</li> <li>-specific therapeutic procedures</li> <li>-cooperation between people with different competences</li> <li>-parental involvement</li> <li>-provision of benefits under the Education Act</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>long-term, regular and intensive special education development</li> <li>-continuous use of learning methods adapted to the level of learning ability</li> <li>-reducing social disadvantages</li> <li>-cooperation with parents</li> </ul>  |
| Result     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-improving environmental factors</li> <li>-complex pedagogical development</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-long-term persistent problem</li> <li>-systemic and complex development to improve school performance, learning</li> <li>-motivation to learn</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learning skills and outcomes can improve if complex support is started as early as possible</li> <li>-further learning in vocational school</li> </ul>   |

**3. figure** Details of learning difficulties

Source: own ed, Mesterházi, Szekeres (2019): *Schooling of children with learning difficulties*



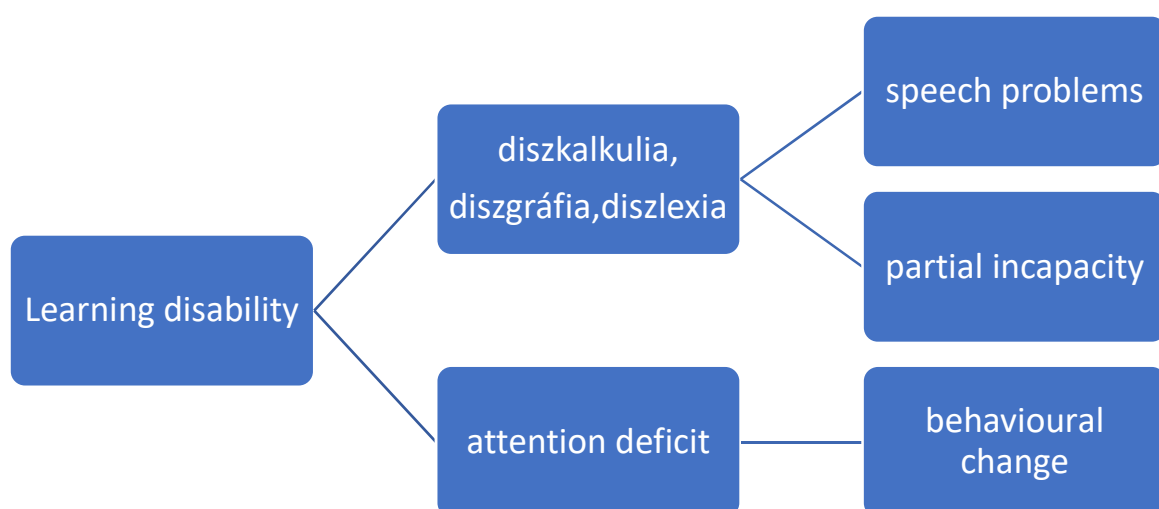


4. figure *Definition of terms (own work)*

The results show that practising teachers are more familiar with the concepts. 80% of them found the correct definition of the most recognised and well-understood concept of learning disability. While among students, it was only 45%. There is not such a big difference for the other two definitions, but the difference is clearly visible in the graph. The definition of learning disability was found by 53% of the majority of teachers and 34% of students. Which shows that far fewer people were familiar with this concept. And a lower number found the definition of learning disability. 50% or half of practising teachers and 29% of student teachers correctly interpreted the terms.

The definition of learning disability, which is the most common and perhaps the easiest to define, was even more common, but only half of the respondents knew the definition of learning disability. This illustrates the imprecision and lack of knowledge of the concepts of learning difficulties among both students and the majority of teachers.

In the next question, I sought answers to the question of which children with learning disabilities appear in the integration process. Hidden in the question was a clear indication that they did not have an accurate understanding of the meaning of learning disability. In a question processed by content analysis, the most frequent answers (more than 400) were dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. Speech problems, partial ability disorder and conduct disorder appeared in a very small number of places.



5. figure *Learning disability (own creation)*

However, a large number of very different lists of terms have also appeared. They included learning difficulties, social circumstances, different areas of disability. It was clear that there was a lack of knowledge of the precise definition of the term. This is not only due to the lack of training, but also to the ambiguity of the definitions.

In Séra and Bernáth's (2004) definition, 'Specific learning difficulties, or learning disabilities in short, are defined as those in which a child of average or above average intelligence, regardless of the optimal school or educational conditions, shows a significant deficit in one or more areas of learning. Difficulties may be in reading, writing and arithmetic, or in perseverance, impulsivity or organisation.' (Séra-Bernáth, 2004; 267) The authors emphasise that it is not intellectual disability, sensory impairment or cultural factors that are responsible for the learning deficit.

The symptoms of learning disabilities can be divided into two main groups, performance and behavioural.

"learning disability is defined as a learning performance that is significantly lower than expected on the basis of intelligence, often due to a neurological deficit or dysfunction, with a specific set of cognitive symptoms. these sub-skills impairments make it fundamentally difficult to learn reading, writing and/or mathematics at school. Performance difficulties often lead to secondary neuroticism. Learning disability develops at an early age and its symptoms can be found in adulthood. It can be well controlled with cognitive and learning therapies and may present as an associated symptom of various disabilities." (Sarkady-Zsoldos, 1999) "Learning disabilities is a general, umbrella term for a heterogeneous group of different ability deficits that interfere with the acquisition and use of attentional functions, speech, reading, writing and numeracy skills, but do not fall into the traditional categories of ability deficits (blindness, deafness and intellectual disability). Although a learning disability may co-occur with other deficits (e.g. sensory impairments, emotional disturbances) or negative environmental influences (e.g. adverse socio-cultural background, inadequate education), it is not a direct consequence of them." (Yewchuk-Lupart, 1993).

The definitions of these concepts show that there is no complete agreement, which does not provide a precise basis. As Gergő Vida has put it in his study, it is not enough to agree on the broad outline, especially if we build on it in many cases in the diagnosis and care and rehabilitation processes.

The literature written in 2019 mentions three groups of learning disabilities. Neurogenic, psychogenic, and posttraumatic learning disorders. Of these, the content analysis revealed that 90% of the problems are classified only in the first group. The dis- categories are mentioned and this delimits the concept of learning disability for the respondents.

### 3. Summary

In the process of co-parenting, one can encounter many types of learning problems that cannot be definitely drawn into one category. As each child's developmental process is individual to some degree, so are the problems. But there are basic concepts to start with and should provide guidance for mainstream teachers in practice. Knowledge of these definitions would be necessary for an educator to interpret an expert opinion. It is necessary to know what the main characteristics of dyslexia are in order to be able to build up a teaching process. Inadequate knowledge of the concepts has a multi-level starting point. The acquisition of knowledge in teacher training does not provide a solid basis for the recording of certain concepts, as they are not always presented in the same way in the literature. Thus, in addition to an inclusive methodological renewal of training, it would also be important to develop precise category systems. Moreover, the constant change in concepts also makes it difficult to keep up to date, i.e. up-to-date knowledge is always needed. The constant changes in definitions in special needs education have been highlighted in the first part in a few areas. It shows that some definitions have changed over the years and are difficult to follow.

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