



PON

**PEDAGOGIJA,
OBRAZOVANJE
I NASTAVA**
Zbornik radova

3. međunarodne znanstvene konferencije

**PEDAGOGY,
EDUCATION
AND INSTRUCTION**
Conference Proceedings
3rd International Scientific Conference

Nakladnik / Publisher

FAKULTET PRIRODOSLOVNO-MATEMATIČKIH I ODGOJNIH ZNANOSTI
SVEUČILIŠTA U MOSTARU

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION - UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR

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FRAM-ZIRAL, Mostar

NAPOMENA / NOTE

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CIP - Katalogizacija u publikaciji
Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka
Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo

37(063)(082)

MEDUNARODNA znanstvena konferencija Pedagogija, obrazovanje i nastava
(3 ; 2016 ; Mostar)

Pedagogija, obrazovanje i nastava : zbornik radova 3. Medunarodne znanstvene konferencije, Mostar, 21.-22. listopada 2016. = Pedagogy, education and instruction : conference proceedings 3rd International Scientific Conference, Mostar, 21st - 22nd October 2016. - Mostar : Sveučilište, Fakultet prirodoslovno-matematičkih i odgojnih znanosti, 2018. - 989 str. : graf. prikazi ; 24 cm

Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Abstracts.

ISBN 978-9958-16-086-8

COBISS.BH-ID 25701638

ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS OF TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THEIR PEERS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify and examine attitudes of students of typical development towards their peers with disabilities. The research sample was formed by 104 students of both sexes (43,7% male, and 56,3 female), and they attended the sixth and the seventh grade of primary school. The survey was conducted in three primary schools in Belgrade, during May 2014. The results show that students with disabilities need to provide additional assistance in education. More than half of the students of typical development (53,8%) agree that students with disabilities should be paid more attention than students who do not have a disability. For a large number of claims, the respondents do not have a clearly defined stance. Knowledge of students' attitudes toward peers with disabilities, can be used to create a variety of programs in order to establish positive attitudes.

Key words: inclusion, attitudes, students with disabilities

Introduction

Attitudes occupy an important place in our everyday life. Behavior is motivated by the attitude and they directly influence our actions and behavior. To become a society that accepts the inclusion model, ie a society where everyone has equal rights and opportunities regardless of individual differences is essential the changing attitudes towards people with disabilities. There are two kinds of attitudes, personal attitudes and social attitudes. Personal attitudes are determined by the characteristics of the individual. These are the most common attitudes to a parent, a friend or to an object. Social attitudes related to the wider community. That may be a attitudes to race,

nationality, particular social groups such as minority groups in society or groups that have unequal material status in relation to our or groups of persons with disabilities or developmental disorders (Rot, 1990).

Students of typical development who attend the class in which it will be included students with disabilities, represent a very important category that determines the success of inclusion. From their attitude depends on the extent to which students with disabilities will be accepted into the class. They are largely responsible for the success of inclusion. There may be acceptance, rejection or ignoring, but also up to range of negative behaviors that are directed towards children with disabilities. How will the other students react to the inclusion of children with disabilities depends on family education, but also on the extent to which preparations are done and training for this type of interaction and to what extent the environment is structured (Innes & Diamond, 1999).

A large number of explanations of success of inclusive education lies in the way of participation of students with disabilities in social middle class. One of the central ideas of inclusive education is to be achieved through the application of benefits for the children of the typical population and for children with disabilities (Flem & Keller, 2000).

According to the study, most of students with disabilities function well in regular schools, but some of them have difficulties to be accepted and to make friendships (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002; Smoot, 2004).

Aim

The aim of this study was to identify and examine attitudes of students of typical development towards their peers with disabilities.

Methods

Sample

The research sample was formed by 104 students of both sexes (43,7% were male, and 56,3 were female). At the time of researching, students attended the sixth and the seventh grade of primary school.

The place and time of the survey

The survey was conducted in three primary schools in Belgrade, during May 2014.

Instrument

For the study, we constructed scale of attitudes of Likert type, modeled on PITI-scale (Suzić, 2008). The scale contains 24 item. Respondents for each statement expressing their level of agreement or disagreement. This is the first study in which it is used this scale.

Statistical analysis

Analyses were performed using SPSS 19.0.1 for Windows. Descriptive statistics methods, absolute and relative indicators were applied for data processing, and relation between independent and dependent variables was investigated by t- test.

Results

Table 1. Students attitudes toward inclusive education

Attitudes	I absolutely agree		I agree		Neither agree nor disagree		I do not agree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
It is necessary for students with disabilities to provide additional assistance in education.	42		45		9		6		2		104	
		40,4		43,3		8,7		5,8		1,9		100
Students with disabilities are not necessary to include in regular schools, they are better in special schools.	11		45		35		11		2		104	
		10,6		43,3		33,7		10,6		1,9		100
The school is required to have a special department for students with disabilities separately from the ordinary.	11		44		32		11		6		104	
		10,6		42,3		30,8		10,6		5,8		100
Students with disabilities need to devote more attention compared to students who do not have problems.	18		56		24		6		–		104	
		17,3		53,8		23,1		5,8				100
Students with disabilities can be a useful member of society.	20		49		25		9		1		104	
		19,2		47,1		24		8,7		1		100
For students with disabilities, it is important to be involved in extracurricular activities with their peers.	25		38		33		8		–		104	
		24		36,5		31,7		7,7				100
To accept students with disabilities is an essential attitude of teachers.	21		49		21		11		2		104	
		20,2		47,1		20,2		10,6		1,9		100
Students with disabilities should not be included in regular classes because it interferes with other students in the class.	9		16		49		19		11		104	
		8,7		15,4		47,1		18,3		10,6		100
It does not matter that students with disabilities are included in the mainstream of life (social environment).	2		14		31		31		26		104	
		1,9		13,5		29,8		29,8		25		100
Students with disabilities do not need to go on a field trip with other children.	3		20		26		32		23		104	
		2,9		19,2		25		30,8		22,1		100
Students with disabilities need to associate free time with other children.	39		42		16		7		–		104	
		37,5		40,4		15,4		6,7				100

It is necessary to students with disabilities placed in separate rooms on the outskirts continues.	4	29	35	25	11	104
	3,8	27,9	33,7	24	10,6	100
It is necessary to single out a group of students with disabilities in physical education classes.	13	41	32	17	1	104
	12,5	39,4	30,8	16,3	1	100
Students with disabilities should not sit alone at a desk that would not interfere with other students.	2	31	25	30	15	103
	1,9	30,1	24,3	29,1	14,6	100
Students with disabilities should not participate in school events.	4	10	24	26	40	104
	3,8	9,6	23,1	25	38,5	100
A student with severe disabilities should not be educated.	2	11	26	21	44	104
	1,9	10,6	25	20,2	42,3	100
Students with disabilities should be together with other students to attend classes.	17	40	29	15	3	104
	16,3	38,5	27,9	14,4	2,9	100
The inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools, developing human, empathic and helping relationship with other children.	20	39	41	2	2	104
	19,2	37,5	39,4	1,9	1,9	100
In inclusive classes students with disabilities to develop their potential.	8	43	41	9	2	103
	7,8	41,7	39,8	8,7	1,9	100
Level preserved abilities, or degree of disability students is the main factor of success of inclusion.	8	37	49	10	-	104
	7,7	35,6	47,1	9,6	-	100
The main factor of success is the inclusion of professional preparation of the teacher / teachers.	12	40	42	7	3	104
	11,5	38,5	40,4	6,7	2,9	100
In working with students with disabilities, in addition to teachers is necessary and help special education teacher.	16	39	42	5	1	103
	15,5	37,5	40,4	4,8	1	100
Students with disabilities should be involved in group activities.	30	46	16	11	1	104
	28,8	44,2	15,4	10,6	1	100
Students with disabilities in regular schools hinder the implementation of planned activities.	8	28	31	27	10	104
	7,7	26,9	29,8	26	9,6	100

By analysis of statistical data, we came to results that most students agree with statements that students with disabilities should provide additional assistance in education and greater attention compared to students who do not have a disability, that they need not be included in the regular school, but if they are already involved that it is better that there is a special department separate from the ordinary.

They agree that student with disabilities can be a useful member of society and that they should be involved in extracurricular activities with their peers, as well as free time socialize with other children and being involved in group activities.

Students who attend regular schools agree that the inclusive classes students with disabilities are developing their potential. Also, they can attend regular school, but for their acceptance is an essential attitude of teachers.

Students of typical development think that it is best for students with disabilities to sat alone in a pew, not to interfering with the other students. On the part of physical education isolate them in a separate group, that someone would not hurt them. The students with typical development do not agree with the statement that students with disabilities do not need to go on a field trip with other children, or for other claims have no defined position. High standard deviation confirms the difference in response to specific allegations ($\sigma = 771 - 1,156$).

Table 2. The statistical significance of differences in attitudes toward inclusion of gender

Inclusion		M	sd	t (df)	p
gender	M	83,17	8,49	-1,11 (98)	.270
	F	85,21	9,21		

By testing the statistical significance of differences in attitudes toward inclusion among students of different sexes has been found that there are no significant differences ($p = 0.270$). This means that boys and girls have the same defined attitude on inclusion, and that correspond to the set claims like.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify and examine attitudes of students of typical development towards their peers with disabilities.

Earlier studies indicate that the attitudes of teachers (Norwich, 1994), class size (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) and the type of disability have the impact on the inclusion. (Stoiber, Gettinger & Goetz, 1998). Particular importance in the process of inclusion take attitudes of typical development students towards the population of children with disabilities. The results of our study showed that 67,3% of students with typical development believe that the attitude of teachers is essential for the inclusion.

Nowicki & Sandieson (2002) suggest that negative attitudes of their peers towards children with disabilities is one of the main problems of inclusive education. Negative attitudes can result as a poor acceptance by peers, fewer friendships, loneliness or rejection and even aggression towards children with disabilities. It is significant to state that numerous studies confirmed the link between attitudes of students with typical development towards students with disabilities on the one hand and the degree of participation of students with disabilities in the school environment. Okagaki et al. (1998) found that students who express more willingness to play with peers with disabilities are more often and enter into specific interactions with them in terms of play

and joint participation in school activities. Participants from our research find that students with disabilities need to associate free time with other children (77,9%), but 32% believes that students with disabilities should be sitting alone in a pew. 60% of participants thought that it is important for students with disabilities to be involved in extracurricular activities with their peers, but 52% thought that it is necessary to single out a group of students with disabilities in physical education classes.

Analyzing the impact of specific variables on attitudes of students of a typical population to students with developmental disabilities was found that gender determines attitude. The girls had a more positive attitude than boys (Swaim & Morgan, 2001). In our research, we obtained a difference in attitudes between boys and girls, but it was not statistically significant.

Conclusion

Because of the potential consequences that can have negative attitudes, it is important to know what are the variables associated with the attitudes of the typical student population. Such knowledge may lead to the emergence of new forms of intervention, with the aim of predicting, explaining and manipulation reactions of students. Also, the very important thing is the age when students will begin with interventions. It is known that attitudes are formed by younger days, but also can change.

The limitation of this study is the small sample, so we can not make generalized conclusions. It is necessary to conduct research on a larger sample and determine whether the attitudes toward students with disabilities actual or declarative character.

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