

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE INTEGRATION OF PUPILS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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Since 1980 there has been a law requiring educational integration in the Republic of Croatia, yet, to date the results have not been satisfactory. Successful realisation of this process depends a lot on teachers and their readiness to accept children with developmental difficulties, as well as to create the most suitable individualised educational approaches. Since a lot of results obtained in other countries indicate unfavourable teachers' attitudes, the aim of this study was to investigate regular primary school teachers' attitudes towards children with intellectual disabilities and their integration into regular primary schools in the Republic of Croatia. The Lickert type attitude inventory, "Attitudes toward Integration", consisting of 21 items with a 5 level acceptance scale, was applied on the same sample of 194 teachers. Five attitude factors were isolated, showing significant attitude differences between groups of subjects, in terms of sex, age, educational level and employment period in the regular primary school. The obtained results show the need for additional teacher education, to develop the acceptance of intellectually disabled pupils.

key words: educational integration, children with intellectual disabilities, attitudes

INTRODUCTION

Educational integration was legalised in the Republic of Croatia in 1980 by the Law of Up-bringing and Primary Education, which brought the possibility of full and partial integration to children with development difficulties. Croatia has slightly less than 5 million inhabitants, with 428,000 primary school pupils. The results of the State Statistical Institute show that only 4,416 pupils with development difficulties are integrated in the regular school system (a little over 1%), the majority of whom are children with intellectual disabilities. However, professionals familiar with the educational situation in Croatia disagree with these figures, stating that a considerably higher number of pupils in regular education require additional help, but are not registered.

Although over 15 years have passed since the legal regulation, a number of subjective, objective and organisational demands have not been met. The recent political situation has also put great strain on the integrational work, and the process of integration in Croatia is still not satisfactory.

A great role in integration is attributed to teachers, as the successful realisation of this process greatly depends on their readiness to accept children with development difficulties and to find the most adequate methods of up-bringing and education (Mavrin-Cavor, Levandovski, 1991; Mustač,

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