CZU: 37.011.3-051:373.043.2-056 **https://doi.org/10.59295/sum5(175)2024_22**

THE ROLES OF TEACHERS IN THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SEN IN MASS EDUCATION CLASSES

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In this article, the roles of the teaching staff in mass education institutions, from the primary level, to facilitate the process of inclusion of students with special educational needs are addressed. These roles are analyzed both individually and from the perspective of the classroom teacher's teamwork with other specialists involved in the inclusion process of students with special educational needs, but also in partnership with their families.

Conceptual aspects are presented regarding the roles of the teaching staff in an inclusive context, to ensure a quality education, adapted and individualized, in relation to the needs, type and degree of disability, psycho-individual and cognitive characteristics of students with special educational needs, taking account of the discrepancy between chronological and mental age, which requires inclusion in mainstream education classes, being schooled alongside typical students, as well as concrete examples from their own scientific research.

Keywords*: the roles of the teaching staff, students with special educational needs, inclusion.*

ROLURILE CADRELOR DIDACTICE ÎN PROCESUL DE INCLUZIUNE A ELEVILOR CU CES ÎN CLASELE DIN ÎNVĂŢĂMÂNTUL DE MASĂ

În acest articol sunt abordate rolurile pe care le deţine cadrul didactic în instituţiile din învăţământul de masă, de la nivel primar, pentru facilitarea procesului de incluziune a elevilor cu cerinţe educaţionale speciale. Aceste roluri sunt analizate atât în plan individual, cât şi din perspectiva lucrului în echipă a învăţătorului de la clasă cu alţi specialişti implicaţi în procesul de incluziune a elevilor cu cerinţe educaţionale speciale, dar şi în parteneriat cu familiile acestora.

Se expun aspecte conceptuale cu privire la rolurile cadrului didactic în context incluziv, pentru asigurarea unei educaţii de calitate, adaptată şi individualizată, în raport cu nevoile, tipul şi gradul de dizabilitate, caracteristicile psiho-individuale şi cognitive ale elevilor cu cerinţe educaţionale speciale, ţinând cont de discrepanţa dintre vârsta cronologică şi mintală, care solicită incluziunea în clasele din învăţământul de masă, fiind şcolarizaţi alături de elevii tipici, precum şi exemple concrete din propria cercetare ştiinţifică.

Cuvinte-cheie*: rolurile cadrului didactic, elevi cu cerinţe educaţionale speciale, incluziune.*

Introduction

The inclusion process of students with special educational needs is an increasingly complex one that involves the training of human, financial, material and temporal resources, as it takes place in several stages and takes place over a long period of time. Human resources include the management staff from the school unit, the classroom teacher who adopts inclusive practices, the support teacher, other specialists from the educational institution, who must form a multidisciplinary team, and together they will create favorable conditions, from the pedagogical, social and psiychological perspectives, necessary for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education classes. From the financial resources at the school level, funds should also be allocated to students with special needs, in order to create and ensure an inclusive school environment through access and participation of this category of students in all school spaces, to adapt and, implicitly, facilitate optimal conditions for carrying out the educational process. From a temporal point of view, teachers and all staff involved in the inclusion process must give time to students with special educational needs to settle in the school, contribute to his integration into the class group and, most importantly, pay attention in the educational-instructional process for all children, equally.

According to the document Law on pre-university education no. 519, chapter V, section 1, (i) specifies the need to ensure „support for mass education units and especially in carrying out a permanent process of improving management, educational policies, practices and organizational culture, so that the existing

resources to be used for the purpose of supporting the participation in the educational process of all beneficiaries within a community" [7].

In the Education Code, chapter XII, art. 53, (3), a, the functions of teaching staff in general education, primary level are provided for: teacher, professor, support teaching staff, teaching assistant, speech therapist, psychologist, psychopedagogue, circle leader [4].

In the Order of the Minister of Education no. 623, the professional competence standards of general education teachers are exposed, within the five areas of competence: didactic design, living environment, educational process, professional development and educational partnerships [10].

The roles of the teacher in mainstream education institutions could be: teaching staff-curriculum researcher, facilitator of relations between/with students, teacher-mediator of students in the learning process, maker of curricular adaptations, coach of students in the learning process, provides feedback and evaluation in the educational process [1, p. 170].

Thus, through the initial evaluation, the teaching staff will determine the initial level of the student with C.E.S. preparatory or 1st grade. The family has a very important role in children's lives and they can contribute with information and personal data about the child, which the teaching staff cannot discover in the school environment.

After the stage of identifying the individual special needs that each individual student requires, the teaching staff will have the role of curriculum designer, and to fulfill this, continuous professional training in the field of inclusive education is necessary, according to the Pre-University Education Law no. 519, chapter V, section 1, (k) mentions „the development and implementation of national programs for continuous training of teaching staff from the national education system, in the field of inclusive education" [7].

The teaching staff will have an individualized approach to training, by acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge during training, which they can be transfer ed and applied to students with special educational requirements, will adapt the methods, strategies, didactic means with inclusive ones, customize tasks and worksheets, depending on the cognitive level, convey information with a lower degree of difficulty, depending on the level of understanding of the students with SEN in the class.

Fig. 1. Increasing interest in the continuous professional training of primary school teachers in the field of inclusive education.



In the framework of my scientific research among the respondents who participated in the scientific experiment, I noticed a maximization of interest in the continuous professional training in the field of inclusive education of teaching staff in mass education, because in mass education institutions there are more and more several cases of students with different special needs, and in order to satisfy their needs, it is necessary to train them, as well as to accumulate the 90 transferable credits that each teacher must have during five school years, called five-year, provided in Order no. 5561/2011, art. 4, (a), [9], but also following the completion of teaching degrees II and I, university studies, professional conversion or specialization in another field of license, provided in Figure no. 1.

The role of the teaching staff is to individualize the training of students with special educational needs, treating each student differently, depending on their individual characteristics, by developing adapted and differentiated work tasks, during educational activities, of learning forms, the appropriate preparation of the classroom space, the placement of furniture according to the needs of the student with CES, the use of additional methods, procedures and means to meet the educational requirements of this category of students in the class, offering individual support to these students in different situations, the differentiation being a function of their previous experiences, style, own rhythm, of the individual potential, within the limit allowed by the disability, in relation to their interests, aspirations and personal particularities [5, p. 49].

The application of effective methods, inclusive didactic strategies, as well as the adaptation of materials and work tasks in the instructional-educational and recuperative process of students with CES requires the completion of several stages: the identification of students in difficulty, as well as the causes that generated certain needs special needs, the diagnosis of students with special educational needs, the establishment of their initial cognitive level, the permanent monitoring of the evolution on all levels of each individual student with CES and the school performance, the design of a differentiated and individualized curriculum, depending on the particular situation of each one and of the problems they face in terms of education, the development of an educational approach centered on the student, by creating learning situations that will favor the registration of school progress, by continuous motivation of the student with CES and the application of formative assessment, the collaboration between the teaching staff in the school and other specialists who offer support services, school counseling and parent involvement.

In correlation with these stages, the following inclusive strategies specific to interactive learning can be successfully implemented: capitalizing on students' previous experiences and knowledge in educational activities, using games in the learning process (didactic game, dramatization, role play), using problematization on certain sequences of the lesson and their transposition into practice through different methods and procedures, such as storytelling, modeling, drawing, manual work; creative resolution of conflicts in the classroom, active collaboration with students' parents and capitalizing on resources from the local community as ways of supporting the teaching-learning-evaluation process; involving students in educational activities that imply cooperation between them to solve some problems that have arisen at the group level, through which they have the opportunity to learn to listen to each other, negotiate, respect and accept the opinion of the other, on the topic addressed in the respective group [5, p. 58].

At the class level, the teacher is responsible for creating an inclusive school environment and atmosphere, a favorable climate for the teaching-learning-evaluation process for all students in the class, to encourage the formation of friendships between them, teamwork, interaction , collaborating, socializing, providing mutual support, accepting their differences, treating each other with respect and empathy.

Also, the teaching staff in the classroom, in collaboration with the support teacher and the whole multidisciplinary team of specialists in the school who work with the student with special educational requirements, the students with special needs and their parents, to develop individualized and personalized school programs, according to the type and degree of disability and/or the educational requirements that the student has in the instructional-educational process, but also the cognitive level, the learning style, the types of intelligence, the own pace, the degree of motivation, interest in learning, the potential it has and the creation of educational contexts in which to capitalize and amplify them, in the educational approach [3, p. 25].

Then, at a certain predetermined time interval, the individualized personalized plans (IEPs) will be reviewed by the classroom teacher together with the support teacher, and the individualized educational plans (IEPs) in collaboration with the itinerant teacher, in the case home-schooled students, students with educational requirements will be monitored during their application and implementation, in order to observe their recorded school progress, reflected through school performance.

Cooperative learning at the class level is a method of organizing the learning process that involves different challenges, at the own pace and modality of each student with CES, since the students in a group have diverse personalities, they must work together and to help each other, obtaining a final result, reaching their intended goal.

Differentiated learning involves the use of methods, didactic strategies, didactic means and materials, adapted and the differentiation of learning contents for students with special educational needs integrated in mainstream education, the organization of flexible activities, on which students can work individually or can be organized in groups, the teaching staff has the role of a guide, offering support in the learning process, flexible time in relation to the pace and needs of students with CES, centered on formative assessment [6, p. 45].

The teacher has the role of facilitator of relations between/with students, both within the educational activities in the educational institution, during breaks, and in the extracurricular environment, at the sociocultural level, favors the improvement of relations between student-student, teacher-student, strengthening the relationship between child and parent.

Thus, the relationships will strengthen through interschool partnerships, for the development of extracurricular educational activities, with other mainstream education institutions, where they will have the opportunity to adapt to new places, meet and talk with other unknown people and interact with typical students with the goal of changing their attitudes towards students with special educational needs, through acceptance and tolerance. It can also come from special education, through which they will be able to know and participate together with other students with special needs in special educational activities.

In this sense, other members of the local community, the parents of students from partner schools can be trained in such activities, in order to sensitize them, to findout their specific characteristics, depending on the special educational requirements that the respective students have, to change their preconceived attitudes and ideas regarding this category of students, as well as to encourage and accept education, implicitly their schooling alongside typical children in mainstream schools [11, p.19,20].

In the process of getting to know the students from a collective or from the school, the teacher has the role of mediator, at a general level, since students with special educational needs usually have difficulties adapting to new spaces, with unknown people, and it the teaching staff has completed a continuous training course in the field of inclusive education, they will be able to resolve the small conflicts that may arise between the students of the class or the student with special educational needs and other students in the school or their parents, by discovering the causes that generated the conflict, the context and the duration and by finding the optimal solution to solve them [13, p.60].

Conflicts can arise between students-students, students-teachers, students-parents, teachers-parents, classroom teachers or those who are part of the multidisciplinary team and other specialists involved in the inclusion process of the student with special educational needs, between parents- management staff of the school unit, parents-representatives of local authorities, majority parents-minority parents.

For a good management of a conflict, teachers in mainstream education must acquire, through continuous training courses, communication skills, problem solving, negotiation and mediation of conflict situations, by establishing a conflict management program at the class and or school level, and resolving a conflict with the help of negotiation is the most optimal option, being possible through five strategies: competition or confrontation, avoidance, collaboration or compromise [13, p.63].

Also, the classroom teacher, in collaboration with the members of the multidisciplinary team who are involved in the educational approach of the student with special educational needs, must constantly continue monitoring the evolution of the mental processes on an individual level of each student with special needs. These refer to the type of memory acquired during the educational approach by the student with special educational needs, the degree of improvement in the level of attention, concentration, during educational activities, of understanding and solving work tasks, of the behavior manifested both in the plan personally, as well as in relation to others, the control of emotions and stimuli that can disturb them.

Thus, the classroom teacher, together with the school counsellor, will apply in pedagogical practice, the theories of E Thorndike, J Watson and B F Skinner that refer to behavioral therapy from a behaviorist perspective, for the student with special educational needs, it is very beneficial in addition to pedagogical and psychological counselling, in order to identify the stimuli in the environment that precede the behavior, i.e. the antecedents and stimuli that follow the undesirable behavior shown by the student, respectively – its consequences. The teacher will work in collaboration with specialists to remove unwanted behaviors and to replace them with desirable behaviors, which the student with special needs will show more and more frequently, in the school, family and social environment, as well as in everyday life [12, p.83].

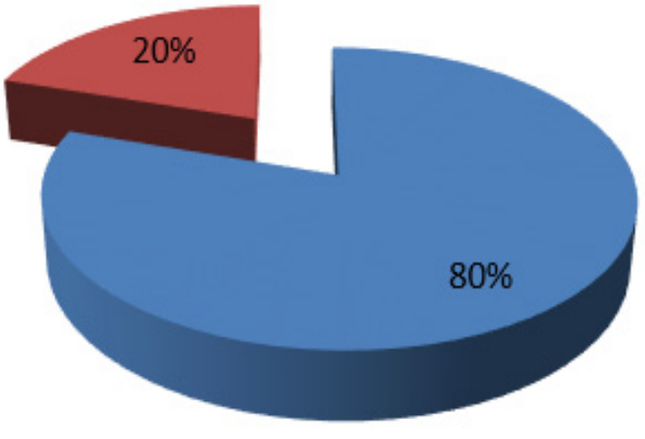
In the training pricess the teacher must attract and maintain his students with special educational needs in the learning process, by continuously stimulating motivation and interest in learning, by discovering the types of intelligence in the student with multiple special educational needs and their valorization during his educational path.

Also, in the instructional-educational process of students with special educational needs, the teaching staff must use inclusive, innovative and interactive active-participatory didactic methods, along with means, didactic materials and work techniques, adapted, according to their needs, moreover, feedback and evaluation in the educational process have an important role in the evolution and educational progress of

students with special educational needs [14, p.15].

From my own scientific research, I found aut from a praxeological aspect that a poorly developed motivation and a low interest in the learning process of a student with special educational needs is/was caused by the non-involvement of parents who have not had any education either and do not encourage and support their own children. There may be situations when some of these students have no family or come from disadvantaged, single-parent backgrounds, with a precarious socialment financial situation and socio-educational barriers. These problems can appear through the prism of the fact that they encounter learning difficulties in some school subjects, especially in the Romanian language and literature and mathematics, which can worsen over time if they do not receive individualized specialized help, they often fail to get the grade minimum at the national assessment exams, from the end of the 2nd and 4th grades, because the subjects are not adapted according to the individual special educational requirements, shown in Figure 2.

Fig. 2. The distribution of students according to the learning difficulties recorded in the instructional-educational process.

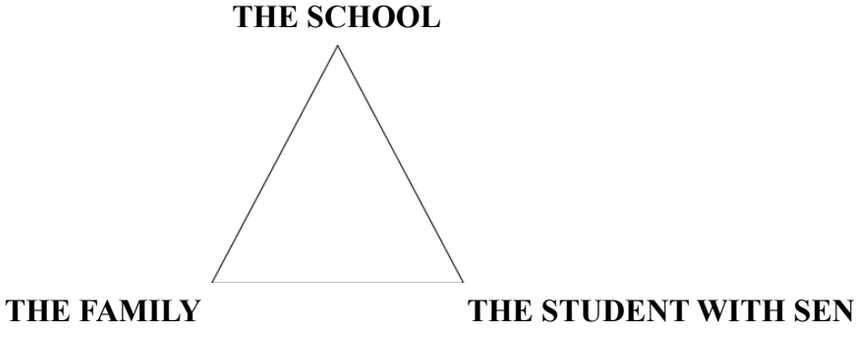


The partnership between school-family-students (Figure 3), within the educational institution is particularly important in the process of inclusion of students with CES, the teaching staff of the class will work in a team with the other members of the multidisciplinary team who are involved in the inclusion process of students with special educational needs in mainstream education, to ensure a specific assessment of this type of learning, applying also the mental models proposed by Jean Piaget, which refer to the processes of accommodation and assimilation, from a psycho- social learning [8, p. 382,383].

Also, the relationship between the parent and child must be solid, to spend their free time together with all its members, by organizing and carrying out joint activities in which the child with CES is involved, to know that he is listened to and encouraged and expresses his needs, concerns, but also to be valued for his achievements no matter how small they may be, to know that his parents will always be by his side and he will have permanent support from them.

The family must form an active partnership, through continuous collaboration with the school, with the staff who are part of the multidisciplinary team, being involved in the educational activities carried out by the teachers, but it is equally important to monitor the child's activities outside school and continuing learning at home, together with parents [2, p. 174,175].

Fig. 3. The partnership between school-family-student.



In the context of the inclusive school, the instructional-educational process implies certain changes at the curriculum level, through adaptation and flexibility, depending on the needs of each student with SEN, in active partnership with other educational units or other public institutions, it involves the creation of an

inclusive environment, by offering favorable conditions for the inclusion process of students with educational needs in public school units and their adaptation according to their needs, by providing educational support services, as well as access and participation in all learning activities, contributing to the reduction of barriers and the difficulties faced by students with CES, their marginalization or exclusion [6, p.29].

In conclusion, for an optimal socio-educational inclusion of students with special educational needs, there is a need for awareness and adaptation at the level of mainstream education institutions, training and continuous professional training of school staff, family involvement and the contribution of local community members.

Among the teaching staff, as well as the specialists involved in the process of inclusion of students with special educational needs in the classes of mainstream education, primary level, who make up the multidisciplinary team, there must be collaboration, in order to offer a high quality education, in the superior interest of the student.

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Presented on 11.03.2024