

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE INCLUSION THROUGH GAME OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MASS EDUCATION¹

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Abstract: *The present paper aimed the following objective: interpreting the theoretical reference points regarding the recovery and integration of the people with disabilities. Knowledge of key concepts by the specialists involved in the education of the disabled child is the first step which will favor the inclusion. Therefore, the present paper wishes to support the people involved in the education, facilitating the understanding of the whole process of inclusion. These concepts are not presented theoretically, the concepts are in a continuous relationship, being necessary steps in the process of recovery and integration of the pupil with special educational needs, starting from the particular to the general, with reference to the literature.*

Key words: *inclusion, Special Educational Needs, game, attitude.*

1. Introduction

Through paper "Educational Implications of Game in students with Special Educational Needs from the Inclusive Schools"³, a new way of inclusion was suggested, the inclusion through game addressed to the whole community (teachers, parents, students).

The aim of this paper was to present a model of good practice in the process of recovering the school children with special educational needs. In order to achieve the goal, the following objectives are to be pursued: (1) studying, interpreting the theoretical reference points regarding the recovery and integration of the people with disabilities, (2) designing, developing and testing forms of support for disadvantaged

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children from the inclusive schools such as personalized intervention plans and ways of adapting the curriculum through games (classic games/computer games), (3) developing, pretesting and applying a tool to measure the attitude towards the inclusion of the students with special needs addressed to the whole community, (4) designing, and testing computer applications to help change teachers' attitudes towards the students with special needs.

The present paper answers the first objective. Knowledge of key concepts by the specialists involved in the education of the disabled child is the first step which will favor the inclusion through game. Therefore, the present paper wishes to support the people involved in the education, facilitating the understanding of the whole process of inclusion. These concepts are not presented theoretically, the concepts are in a continuous relationship, being necessary steps in the process of recovery and integration of the pupil with special educational needs, starting from the particular to the general, with reference to the literature.

2. Conceptual delimitation in Special Psychopedagogy

Lupu (2015) in Huţuleac (2015) point out that integration strategies can not be drawn if the main concepts of special psycho-pedagogy, deficiency/inability/ disability/special educational needs (Coman, 2011; Verza, 1995; Gherghuţ, 2001; Vrăşmaş, Daunt, & Muşu, 1996; Radu, 2000) are not known.

In addition to knowing and understanding the concepts of deficiency / inability / disability / special educational needs, another essential step in fostering the inclusion process consists in the correct assessment and diagnosis of the student with special needs. It is considered as a priority to explain the concepts of assessment, diagnosis and prognosis in special psychopedagogy (Vrăşmaş & Oprea, 2000; Verza, 1995).

With regard to the assessment methods (Mitrofan, 1997; Vrăşmaş & Oprea, 2000), they are used according to the limits of each category of deficiencies. The correct assessment and diagnosis of the pupil with special educational needs will favour the inclusion process. Below, the concepts of recovery, rehabilitation and enabling, integration and inclusion are presented.

3. Particularities in the development of the student with Special Educational Needs with the implications on learning

The literature pays special attention to the ontogenetic development of the individual. The analysis of the reference works in this field allows the development of a parallel between the bio-psycho-social development of the typical student and the development of the student with deficiencies (Verza & Verza, 2000; Golu, Zlate, & Verza, 1995; Gherghuţ, 2001, 2005; Şchiopu & Verza, 1995).

Choosing correct intervention strategies involves knowing the learning particularities of the student with special educational needs. In the literature, we encounter innumerable definitions of the learning concept. For a better understanding of the

particularities of learning in the students with special educational needs, some definitions and theories of learning are reviewed (Gagne, 1975; Golu, 1985; Cocoradă, 2007; Neacșu, 1990; Panțuru, 2002).

In order to understand the relationship of learning-development-compensation (Verza, 1995; Golu, 1985), it is necessary to understand the heredity-environment-learning relationship. In this respect, the theories of innatism, the ambiental theories and the interactionist theories of the double determination are listed (Clinciu, 2005).

Understanding the learning process in the children with special educational needs is not limited to the learning-development-compensation relationship. It is important for an optimal integration in mass education of the disabled student to know the stages of writing-reading learning and the specifics of forming the arithmetic computing skills (Păunescu & Mușu, 1981; Montessori, 1977; Păunescu et al., 1982; Bourcier, 1971). The children with special educational needs have difficulties in forming these skills. A varied and disputed terminology is encountered around the concept of learning difficulties (Manolache et al., 1979; Ungureanu, 1998; Horst & Zenke, 2001; Vărășmaș, 2007)

The academic results are not only dependent on the child's intellectual potential. The motivation, emotions, the attitude towards learning are non-cognitive factors of learning that influence academic development. In the case of the children with special educational needs, these factors require attention and a differential treatment from the educator (Neamțu & Gherghuț, 2000; Lelord, 2003; Băban, 2003)

Understanding the learning process in a disabled student allows for choosing the correct learning and integration strategies. Reference is made to the teaching strategies used in the teaching-learning-assessment process in students with special educational needs (Ainscow et al., 2000; Mittler, 2000; Anderson et al., 2004). The literature offers a variety of definitions of the concept of didactic strategy, definitions in a broad sense, definitions in a narrower sense, depending on the smaller or greater number of variables involved in the didactic activity (Cristea, 2000; Noveanu, 1983; Cerghit, 2002; Radu, 1986)

4. Game - the method of learning and recovery therapy for the students with special educational needs

4.1. General considerations of the game

The literature offers various definitions of the game. It is noticed that there are authors who consider the game to be a child-specific activity (Șchiopu, 1997; Claparade, 1975), others say it is an activity that continues to the old age (Landreth, 1993; Golu, 1993). Some authors (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978; Brunner, 1980) attribute to the game an important role in the intellectual, psycho-motor and social development, others think that the game only brings pleasure (Larousse, 1998). The game is also seen as the ideal way of knowing the child, having a universal character (Freud cit. in Golse, 1992)

Landreth (1982, 1993) and Axline (1947) present the characteristics of the game: 1) the game has shape, structure, contains symbols, 2) the game shows the child's

emotional and cognitive development, 3) the game does not depend on external rewards, it has no purpose, 4) the game is natural, spontaneous 5) the game develops the language, thinking, ability to communicate, social skills, fosters understanding feelings, develops sexual identity, 6) the game allows experimenting the role of adult

A whole series of opinions have been issued about the game that have shaped into a number of theories that try to explain its origin, specificity, purpose, among which: the recreation theory, the theory of energy excess, the theory of the preparatory exercise, the theory of the game as an instrument of growth, the theory of the complementary exercise. Amonachvili (1986) describes the early theories of the game as theories that exclude the game from the learning strategy, considering the game either an activity that uses the child's surplus energy, or as an autotelic activity that prepares the child for work or as an activity without an intentional purpose. These theories are opposed to the views of the classics of special psycho-pedagogy. According to Montessori (1977), Decroly, Montchamp (1965), Piaget (1979), Bruner (1986), Mannoni (1964), Dienes (1973) the game plays a central role in the therapeutic educational process. Decroly (1965) emphasizes the importance of the educational play in mental orthopedics. Păunescu and Muşu (1990) consider the game terminology quite ambiguous: some authors considered the game to be an intellectual activity, others a physical activity, and others considered it as a fun activity. Blanski cited in Paunescu and Muşu (1990) is of the opinion that one can not speak of a game theory, because the word "game" is used for too many activities.

4.2. The educational game and the therapeutic game

According to Bache, Mateiaş and Popescu (1994), the educational game is a means of facilitating the passing of the child from the dominant activity to the learning activity. Sabau (2006) recalls that the educational game appears in three aspects: 1) as a form of organizing learning, 2) as part of a learning activity, 3) as a teaching process in learning. The same author makes a classification of educational games. Moscal (2006) and Purcaru (2008) emphasize the fact that the educational game differs from other games by purpose, content, didactic task, rules, game action, game elements, didactic material (the structure of the educational game). In order to ensure that the game is effective, the organizational conditions of the game must be observed.

In terms of game as a form of recovery, Păunescu and Muşu (1990) draw attention to the fact that this form of rehabilitation for mentally disabled children is divided into: 1) game-learning and 2) game-therapy. The same authors distinguish between the game as learning and the educational game, the latter limiting itself to consolidating and verifying the taught knowledge. The game as a recovery process must have operational objectives. Along with the game as a learning device, game therapy is the second form of the whole process of recovery in disabled children. In game therapy, therapists use this activity to help the beneficiaries solve their psychosocial difficulties (ASCA, 2003).

4.3. The educational game on the computer

Adăscăliței (2007) and Cucuș (2006) talk about the penetration of computer technology in the current education system. There are specialists who equate scheduled learning with computer-assisted training. In the current education system, "computer-assisted learning" is done with the help of the computer, through the educational software. Radulescu (1971) defines the programmed training as dosing the information in small steps, which lead the student to knowledge, favouring intellectual development.

Radu (1969) describes the history of this new training technique. Radu (1969), Radulescu (1971) and Cucuș (2015) identify the characteristics and principles of the programmed learning. Putting into practice the programmed learning involves observing some conditions proposed by Skinner, apud Chambers, Sprecher (1983) and Keirns (1999).

Currently, computer-assisted training programs bear the name of educational software. Educational computer games are applications that have the video characteristics of a game but create a learning experience (Freitas, 2006). Gerkuskenko, Sokolova (2013) perform a classification of computer games. Gavini (1961), Jerome, Clarence (1961) recommend the observance of certain phases in developing a computer-assisted training program.

5. The attitude, a decisive factor in the process of inclusion

5.1. The attitude, general characterization

In the literature, there are several definitions of attitude, being an intensively studied field in social psychology. Iluț (2004) explains the interest manifested through its complexity and its multiple facets. The analysis of the definitions in the literature, Luthans (1985), Murray (1938), Grigoruță (2005), Tapia (1991), Folsom (1931), Eiser, Van Den Plicht (1988), Moscovici (1998), Droba (1933), Drăgan and Demetrescu (1996), Roșca (1943), Stoetzel (1963), Boza (2010), Popescu-Neveanu (1978), Chelcea cited by Chelcea and Iluț (2003), Vrabie (1975), allows outlining the following definition of the attitude: a sum of emotional reactions, provisions, more or less durable, stable, conscious or unconscious evaluations which entail a behaviour, an action regarding the object of attitude (situations, ideas, people, one's own person) and which appear on the background of one's own personality, own beliefs, values or under the influence of the social group which manifest themselves with a greater or lesser intensity, in a positive or negative manner, of rejection or acceptance. According to Chircev (1941) the characteristics of attitude are divided into dominant characteristics and secondary characteristics. Boza (2010) reminds of the properties of attitude, raising the following question regarding the characteristics of attitudes: are attitudes temporary constructions or stable entities? As for the functions of attitudes, Katz (1960) mentions four functions. Regarding the classification of attitudes, Brown cited in Chircev (1941) recalls seven types of attitudes.

The attitude consists of three components that interact with each other, having different inputs in forming the attitude. It is what Neculau (2004) and Chelcea (2008) call "The three-dimensional model of attitude": the cognitive component (opinions, beliefs, convictions), the behavioral component (the manifested behaviour), the emotional component. Eiser and Van Den Plight (1988) consider that measuring attitudes is difficult because they are not visible, being measured indirectly. Chircev (1941) lists the following methods for measuring attitudes: 1) The census method, 2) The method of the questionnaire, 3) Opinion tests, 4) Situation tests.

5.2. Forming attitudes

Chircev (1941) describes the individual factors and the social factors that determine the formation of attitudes. Individual factors include age, gender, race, intelligence, temperament, the emotional stability and instability, the tendency towards domination or obedience. Social factors include family, school, church, economic conditions, background, social class, parents' profession, access to information in general, propaganda, the press. Attitudes formation is also explained by the following learning models: contiguous learning, learning through reinforcement, learning through observation. Contextual influences also contribute to the formation of an attitude. Boza (2010) mentions among them goals, mood, body condition, standards and ease of updating information.

5.3. The change of attitude

Moscovici (1998) points out that the change of an attitude requires changes in the whole attitude system, on the three components of attitude. Changing one of them can not be done without influencing the others. Vasian (2013) distinguishes between the formation and change of attitude, starting from two types of attitudes: new attitudes and old attitudes. There are several models that explain the change of attitude. Chelcea (2008) observes that these models explain certain aspects of the process, ignoring others: the behaviorist model, the Hovland-Janis-Keeley model, the attitude modelling by taking over another person's behavior, changing attitudes by exposure to subliminal stimuli, communication theories, dual models of persuasion, the cognitive model, the cognitive dissonance theory, Festinger, the contextualization theory.

6. Conclusion

The clarification of the special psycho-pedagogy concepts (deficiency, inability, handicap, disability, special educational needs) allows a proper assessment, diagnosis and prognosis. After a complex assessment of the student with disability, this process involving knowledge regarding the main evaluation methods and instruments, one can speak of intervention, recovery, rehabilitation and integration. However, in order to choose correctly the intervention strategies, knowing the psycho-pedagogical profile of

the disabled student is necessary. The comparison with the general development of a typical learner makes it possible to identify both the differences and the delays in development, as well as the common traits. The conceptual delineations regarding learning, learning difficulties, the learning-development-compensation relationship and knowing the learning particularities of the students with special needs is an important step in his/her educational integration process.

The intervention system in which the child with special educational needs is involved, as noted by Vrăşmas and Oprea (2003), implies the following steps: identification - diagnosis - orientation - intervention - re-evaluation - recovery / rehabilitation - integration. The problem of recovering the child with deficiencies was fathomed in the second part of this paper, which referred to one of the forms of psycho-pedagogical recovery of the disabled student: the game, as a method of learning and rehabilitation therapy.

The attitude of the community towards the children with special needs may influence negatively or positively the process of inclusion. Changing and forming a desirable attitude towards the vulnerable categories requires the clarification of the concepts in the literature. The third part thus becomes through the theoretical content an important stage in changing teachers' attitudes towards the students with special needs, a change that will favor both their educational integration and their subsequent integration into society.

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