

Characteristics of School and Vocational Counseling for Students with Special Educational Requirements

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to bring forth the importance of parents' implication in the educational process of children with special needs by emphasizing the need of a family–school partnership. Educational and vocational counseling for students in special education imposes the need for efficient inclusion, which requires a commitment to integrating persons with disabilities both in school and society. In other words, the family of a child with special needs is involved in the role of mediator between the child—who may have difficulty adapting to interpersonal relationships—and the social environment, including the community to which they belong and sometimes even strangers. The role of parents as educational partners represents direct implications in the educational environment in which they can influence certain decisions that follow along the progress of the child's education, collaborating with the school in a concrete way and taking managerial functions within the school.

KEYWORDS: school-family partnership, special educational needs, differential diagnosis, mental deficiency, counseling of students with special educational needs-CES

Introduction

The reality of the dynamics of different social-economic environments, as well as the new challenges of the contemporary world (Rotaru 2016, 29-43), have imposed extensive changes in the design and implementation of educational policies and strategies (Rotaru 2021a, 87-92) in most states of the world. The education of students with special educational needs could not ignore or not approach from modern positions the study of the particularities of student development and the identification of new educational strategies better adapted to their needs, regardless of the categories of students we address. Among the challenges of inclusive schools was the need to change mentalities and attitudes regarding students who are different from the "normal" ones, changing social representations of this segment of the school population and renouncing labels, offering equal opportunities for their integration into society.

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Changes in contemporary conceptions regarding the role of the family in ensuring the child's well-being are congruent with the principles of positive psychology and supported by interventions specific to this orientation. Parental support specific to positive families is also seen as an important factor in the development of some constructs of the child's personality, such as self-image, self-esteem, value system, self-confidence, feelings of well-being and psychological comfort, satisfaction and optimism regarding his evolution as a human being, as a member of a healthy community. To promote students' well-being, educational programs (Rotaru 2021b, 190-196) must focus on their interests, talents and strengths, which implies a holistic approach to education, education that should achieve a balance between objectives that consider competition, preparing students for the labor market and educating them for a "good life". Obviously, for these children, it is important how we adults try to offer them help, to find them a suitable place in society where they can be treated normally.

Children with disabilities have access to public schools and can benefit from support services that facilitate this type of integration, special education is all the more extensive as it

must include both the principles approached by regular schools and the principles developed by special education. Positive Schools are schools, in which children receive excellent training both in terms of academic content and in terms of life skills (Snyder and Lopez 2005, 761), which facilitate the development of the best that all children have (both those with normal development and those with special needs), who offer students positive experiences, systematically use positive psychology approaches, have explicit goals and objectives for all actors in the school field, emphasize the student himself, his satisfaction with life in school, on his sense of safety and belonging, and on rewarding his efforts to complete school tasks (Peterson 2006; Hefferon and Boniwell 2011).

Positive education is defined as education, both for the skills targeted by traditional education and for personal skills that lead to positive emotions, well-being and optimal functioning at the level of children and adolescents as well as at the level of parents and educational institutions (Hefferon and Boniwell 2011, 210; Seligman et al. 2009, 293). Family education (Rotaru 2011,5) has in mind the building of habits, norms, values of life within the family and targets its members, encompassing a wider area than parental education. Family education as a complex of social activities carried out by parents, in the family space, aimed at children through the interventionists, and in the direction of parents, being parental training.

The specificity of the disabled child's family involves the role of the parent as a mediator between the special child, whose adaptation to interpersonal relationships is difficult, and the others, including the community and even strangers. Often, this mediation occurs with a lot of subjectivity, so parents can overestimate inappropriate reactions from strangers, misinterpret neutral gestures, and provide the child with a wrong perception of those around them. They may insist on the malice and hypocrisy of the people around them, instilling the belief that their child's disability is not accepted, and that there is a lot of intolerance (Rotaru 2019, 214-215). This approach can turn disability into a barrier, as it frames social difficulties as a terminus, preventing children from understanding and accepting all aspects related to their own disability, especially because the parents themselves may struggle to accept the child's condition (Alois 2013).

The role of the mediator takes on a major importance because the parents' reactions to the child's disability determine the child's reactions of accepting/approaching his disability. The reactions of overprotection, acceptance, denial or rejection group parents into several categories, such as: balanced parents, exaggerated parents, indifferent parents, authoritarian (rigid) parents, inconsistent parents.

Parents of children with CES go through several phases of suffering until the moment of accepting the situation, which we mention next: anger at oneself and at others, negotiation, with God or other higher powers and with oneself, depression, sadness, and regret, fear and insecurity, but also acceptance, emotional detachment and the cessation of self-struggle as argued by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross & Grief Cycle.

The family is the one that assumes responsibility for its members, and society has the role of supporting it. The purpose of working with the family is to expand its competencies through the conscious involvement of its intervention and responsibility. Family engagement is essential because the family of the child with disabilities and/or other SEN will never be able to function or manage the situation on their own but need additional resources, information and support.

In the conditions of the inclusive school, the role of the parents as an educational partner involves several aspects, namely through direct participation in the life of the school, parents can exercise their influence on certain decision-making processes aimed at the educational course by imposing their point of view on the functioning of the school and have a concrete participation to the implementation of managerial functions in the school. Another aspect is the school's embrace of the idea of integration or inclusion, which also depends on the attitude of parents in relation to the child's educational problems, the absence or indifference of parents coming in opposition to this approach, not least the reluctant or distrustful position of parents

regarding the life and educational development of a child with special educational needs (slower or faster changes) creates difficulties, erroneous representations/mentality do not develop positive attitudes. Trust is the foundation of the link between family and school, and proper communication ensures a mutual exchange of trust (Gheruț 2006).

The partnership involves the exchange of information, good practices, experiences, and for this communication to work, it is necessary to train/develop good active listening skills, to know how to listen, and to be able to create some premises for collaboration. For more solid support to support the inclusive school, the members of the students' families must comply with a minimum of requirements, such as providing up-to-date information on their child regarding the preparation of homework, the style and method of learning at home, his interests and the way he reacts in various situations, concerns, preferences/non-preferences, to take part in every school activity and to be active in the process of promoting various practices of educational integration of special children at all levels of social life.

Specific behavioral structures are imposed in order to accept and encourage the integration of people with special needs in their communities, who have the responsibility to provide support to teachers in choosing realistic strategy systems regarding the development and education of children, both in school and outside it through the provision of important information that helps to develop and implement the individualized curriculum for the child, the involvement in decision-making regarding the child and the programs for the continuous development/rehabilitation of the child.

It is very important to accept without resentment the possible limitations implied by the level and difficulty of their deficiencies, but also to be sincere partners in a dialogue and to be open without any reservations about collaborating with the team of specialists responsible for educating and making possible the recovery of the children. This includes observing the evolution that they have presented to the children in different contexts that life can bring them and maintaining a close relationship with other parents in the support group. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that personal experiences related to their own children in the activities that took place within the family are shared, and last but not least, to be aware of the vast advantages that the inclusive school offers to special children to ensure their participation in classes.

The inclusive school and all teachers have the responsibility to create an environment accessible to families, enabling both parents and special children to integrate effectively. This involves mobilizing every family with children with special educational requirements to take part in the established educational and therapeutic program, respecting the rights and grievances of families to opt for when, how, and how much they can engage in therapeutic activities, respectively, their continuation at home. Additionally, it is important to ensure that the exchange of information about the child takes place constantly with the family (Holdevici and Neacșu 2008).

An important role is the location of the resources related to the educational and recuperative-therapeutic program intended for students with special needs, through which the parents' effort can be supported, informing the family about the activities suggested by the recuperative-therapeutic program and its customization at the request of the parents, as well as bringing information to the family regarding any update appearing in the program, but also receiving the suggestions and impressions brought by the family and using them in order to improve the programs dedicated to students with educational requirements.

The partnership has a special role in the operation of the inclusive school, because within them, the students are the main beneficiaries of the collaboration through which certain difficult situations can be anticipated and prevented, they contribute to the development of the educational and social skills of parents and other community actors and offer services and support families, ensures the facilitation of the exchange of ideas between parties, gives rise to innovative ideas and contributes to the solution of certain problems.

The whole partnership facilitates the connection between the child and the family, between the families, the school staff and the community through the opportunity to actively participate in the educational experiences of the students (Muşu 2000).

Teamwork allows all the people involved in the education/development of the child with special educational requirements to satisfy the student's needs by identifying as clearly/precisely as possible the student's strengths, interests and needs and using the collected information and conclusions following the observation of the student's behavior for the purpose of individualizing the curriculum for it, but also establishing the consensus regarding curriculum planning by correlating the general curriculum goals with the individualized goals established in the PEI.

Another advantage offered by teamwork is establishing consensus regarding the way and level of providing support services to the student by suggesting/recommending appropriate educational strategies/technologies, establishing the place where the support activity is carried out (in the classroom, in the classroom resource/offices), establishing other services available in the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are witnessing an extensive reform in special and specially integrated education, characterized by continuous searches for new organizational methods and legislative changes, in accordance with the progress of contemporary society and its changing attitude towards children with special educational needs. The major challenge for today's teaching staff is the proposal and development of activities in partnership that require creativity and imagination in initiation, dynamism in organization and implementation, tolerance (Rotaru 2023, 825-874) and flexibility in decision-making, along with responsibility in evaluation. To carry out a successful project in partnership with community actors, it is essential to master the art of knowing how to respond, equally, to the needs of the community. The program is based on the collaboration of all those involved in the activities carried out in order to form a circle of support, balance, and integration. Progress has been made regarding the level of school-type purchases, cooperation in the working group, and integration in school and society. As a result of these initiatives, we found that children diagnosed with mental retardation and mixed disorder of scholastic abilities demonstrated cognitive behavior characterized by a general phenomenon of disruption in the organization of knowledge, (dysfunctions at the level of cognitive processes, lack of motivation for learning, cognitive immaturity). Moreover, family involvement in learning activities has played an important role. By valuing the opinion of the specialists and providing encouragement and motivation, families have contributed positively on several levels, improving self-esteem and behavior both in and outside of the classroom. Through this collaborative approach, not only the children benefit, but also the entire community, fostering a more inclusive education environment.

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