

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS WITH THE FAMILY OF STUDENT'S

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on several aspects of the relationship between families of students with multiple disabilities and the educational process. Quality-based methodology was used for the research due to a lack of sufficient theoretical background in this area. The objective of the paper was to elucidate the significance of education of students with multiple disabilities for their families and to describe the process of cooperation between these families and the teachers. This paper uses data and outputs from a qualitative analysis of education of students with severe multiple disabilities (semi-structured interviews with 45 teachers of students with multiple disabilities, observation of 4 students in the educational process and an analysis of 30 samples of educational documents using open, axial and selective coding). The resulting theory was combined with the results of a survey focused on the cooperation between the families and the teachers in order to gain a saturated data sample. This survey used semi-structured interviews with 5 teachers of students with multiple disabilities. The data from these interviews were analysed by means of open coding, compared with the outputs of the previous research and a theoretical model for educational intervention with the families of students with multiple disabilities was constructed and described. This model offers ideas for educational practice as well as further research.

Keywords: Educational process, family, multiple disabilities.

Introduction:

The paper deals with various topics connected with the families of students with multiple disabilities (SMD) and the educational process. The basic objective of the study was to identify family needs in the educational process, to map the impact of coping with children's disabilities on the education and to analyse the tasks and course of special educational intervention with families. We used data from quality-based analyses of the educational process in students with SMD (coding and categorisation of semi-structured interviews, analysis of educational documents and observation of student-teacher interaction), and a survey focused on the data concerning the family and education.

The family of a student with SMD has an essential position in the educational process. Education of this group of students requires close participation of their parents in the educational process with respect to the serious communication limitations of the students, limitation of their mental functions, requirement for nursing to ensure basic needs, etc. During the process of education it is also necessary to make sure that the educational intervention reflects the needs of the family and parents' work with the child in the home setting. Empirical experience from practical environments suggests that the teacher-parent cooperation is influenced by a number of factors and is not always satisfactory regarding the educational needs of students with SMD. Therefore, an important topic of special education research is investigating the role of the family in educating these students.

Objectives:

To Study the Multiple Disabilities in the Educational Process with the Family of Student's.

Review of Literature: Most publications focusing on the families of persons with SMD address the issue of the educational process in a limited extent. An analysis of professional literature and papers in international databases revealed that a frequent topic was the quality of life of the families with an individual suffering from SMD (Michalik, 2011; Carona et al., 2012; Vohra et al., 2014, etc.), and the economic position and support of the families with children with SMD (Kyzar et al., 2012; Tadema&Vlaskamp, 2009; Dobson et al., 2001; Whiting, 2014, etc.). In terms of early care, a well-documented topic is working with families with SMD at an early age.

Numerous research studies focused on the communication between family members and children with SMD (**Wilder & Granlund, 2003; Grove et al., 1999; Light, 1985, etc.**) Available research studies also focus on the involvement of children with SMD in family activities (**Axelsson, Granlund, Wilder, 2013; Axelsson, Imms, Wilder, 2014**) as well as parents' participation in family and school-based activities (**Fishman & Nickerson, 2014**). A significant aspect of the family environment is the issue of siblings with SMD (**Roper et al., 2014; Houssier & Vibert, 2013**).

Hypotheses:

There is no significant difference Multiple Disabilities in the Educational Process with the Family of Student's.

Method:

To research the role of the family in educating students with SMD we used the data from a quality-based survey aimed at education of students with severe physical, mental and communication impairment in Special schools. These data were complemented with data from a survey aimed exclusively at specific topics relating to the families of students with SMD in the educational process.

Research of the educational process in students with multiple disabilities:

The methodology of this research was described in a different paper (Kantor et al., 2014); therefore, only basic research data will be summarized. The research study analysed the educational process according to a process scheme as described by Průcha (2009) arranged into input determinants, course and outcomes of the educational process. The objective of the research was to map various educational processes that affect students with SMD according to an analysis of social interaction as one of the fundamental educational phenomena. The research design was of a mixed type, primarily based on quality-oriented procedures and complemented with a questionnaire survey. Data collection was performed by means of semi-structured interviews with 45 teachers, content analysis of 30 individual educational plans, 30 verbal assessments and all-day observation of the teacher-student interaction in four students. The questionnaire survey included a total of 60 teachers. The aim of the questionnaire survey was to test certain topics, for which we had insufficient justification in the data set and which could not be triangulated with data from various sources. For data analysis we used open, axial and selective coding. This procedure was used to develop models for educational processes in the area of adaptation, interaction and development of interpersonal relationships, stimulation, diagnostics and evaluation, self-attendance, saturation of cognitive and aesthetic abilities, processes aimed at the students' health-related needs, coping with risk behaviour and other difficulties, processes of personality development and processes of student-environment inter actions. This text includes unpublished results of the above mentioned research study, which relate to special education interventions at a family level. As far as open coding is concerned, family-related data were divided into the following groups:

- 1) Family needs with respect to a special education intervention.
- 2) Data relating to the process of the parents coping with the child's disabilities and acceptance of the child's real possibilities.
- 3) Course of a special education intervention in working with the child's family.

Follow-up survey aimed at the role of the families of students with severe multiple disabilities in the educational process: The data set from the above described research study did not show sufficient saturation in terms of family-oriented topics. Therefore, the follow-up survey focused solely on these topics. **The aim of the survey** was to complement the data of the above specified topics and use them to develop a model for the description of a special education intervention for working with the child's family. In the survey we used semi-structured interviews with the teachers of students with SMD. The following criteria were used to select the teachers:

- The teachers need to have a degree in special education; Bachelor's degree as a minimum.
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•The teachers need to have at least five year practical experience with educating students with severe multiple disabilities. The survey included a total of 5 teachers. This sample was recruited by means of intentional selection using personal contacts in relevant institutes. Before the visits to individual classes were made the class teacher was informed and consent to his/her participation in the survey was obtained. The course of the interview corresponded with usual interview stages, from preparatory and initial stage, through rise and contact reinforcement, core, to conclusion and termination. During the preparatory and initial stage the interviewee was motivated and familiarized with the purpose of the survey, methods of data recording and ethical principles, and guaranteeing anonymity. The interviews took approximately 30–45 minutes, in one case the total time exceeded 60 minutes.

The basic interview structure: Included establishing contact and conveying information about the purpose of the survey, investigating the needs of families in the context of special education intervention, mapping the way in which the process of coping with disability influences special education intervention and an analysis of tasks and course of special education intervention in working with the child's family. During the course of the survey we also managed to carry out two short interviews with parents of students with SMD. However, due to their low response relevance these are only included as an additional source of information. After all interviews we transcribed the data into a written form and prepared the text material for a quality-based analysis. The analysis used open coding including response quantification. We also searched for original and contradictory statements to be used for theory development. The data were classified into categories; these survey outcomes were compared with the data acquired through an analysis of the educational process of students with SMD. We completed and deepened the categories related to the topic of the survey.

Conclusion:

The paper deals with the association between the family environment of students with multiple disabilities and the educational process. In spite of the discussed methodological limitations the paper presents a summary of conclusions with a sufficient data background. These conclusions relate to the description of family needs with respect to the educational process, tasks and course of a special education intervention and the way in which the process of coping with the child's disability influences student education.

Scope and Recommendations:

The summary of recommendations based on this paper is as follows:

- i. The educational documents need to include the objectives and outcomes relating to the student's family environment (and/or extracurricular environment). For example, this includes professional guidance of the parents, transfer of skills acquired in an extracurricular environment, etc.
- ii. Nursing activities should be used in the educational process. In some students these activities take more time than education.
- iii. The teacher-parent communication represents a significant compensatory mechanism that offsets the students' communication deficiencies and helps both the teachers and families to better understand the students with SMD. Specific compensatory mechanisms described in this text are significant in order to deepen the knowledge about special education methods. This includes sharing of situations and experiences of the student from a school or home environment, studying of the personal history of the student by the teacher, visits to the student's home and learning about the immediate context of the student's life, etc.
- iv. Process of coping with the student's disability by the parents strongly influences the confrontation with the student's real educational possibilities. The course of education is characterized by a shift from excessive (sometimes unrealistic expectations) at the beginning of school attendance to reasonable understanding of the student's educational possibilities. In relation to the process of coping with the student's disability the teachers described a considerable parents' investment into their child's education at the beginning of school attendance, which in many cases results in exhaustion of the parents' mental resources (in some cases this exhaustion results in neglecting the child and a loss of belief in the significance of continuous work with the child). It might be beneficial for the teacher if he/she is able to

realistically assess the parents' possibilities to invest in the care for their child and their child's school education.

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