

ALBANIAN TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teachers' attitudes and opinions have considerable impact on the implementation of the process of inclusive education. The paper aims to measure the attitudes of teachers in primary and secondary public schools of Albania toward inclusive education. The paper aims, also, to get teachers' opinions about the mainstreaming process. For the realization of this study it is used the technique of questionnaire. The measuring instrument is the Mainstreaming Opinionnaire (MO) (Schmelkin (1981). Teachers of some schools of Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopia, Tiranë, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë and Vlora cities of Albania have completed the MO test. It is employed, also, the technique of interviewing teachers of public schools in which there are integrated disabled pupils. According to the results of this study, appropriate conclusions are given. In general, the teachers have not a good attitude concerned the effects of mainstreaming on the students' academic progress. They have, in general, positive attitude about socio-emotional costs of segregation. The teachers consider necessary the improvement of the structure indicators and the improvement of the indicators of teaching process. The data obtained for our teachers coincide, in general, with the data obtained from some studies conducted in other countries. There are given, also, the appropriate suggestions in order to improve the quality of mainstreaming.

Key-words: teachers' attitudes, teachers' opinions, MO test.

1.Introduction

The main focus of the paper is the collecting teachers' thoughts and opinions about inclusive education and the measuring their attitudes about this process. The attitudes toward disability play an important role in the inclusion of disabled people. It is necessary that all the members of the society have positive attitudes toward disability.

Teachers' attitudes influence the process of inclusion, because they work with students. Teachers reflect their knowledges and their experience, but, also, reflect their attitudes of different natures and, therefore, they reflect to them their attitudes about disability.

2.Theoretical Treatment

Inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs and on the resources available to them. In quite a number of studies, the attitude of teachers towards educating pupils with special needs has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive (Meijer C.J.W. 2001. *Inclusive Education and Effective Classroom Practices, European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education*. Martin Noble Editorial/AESOP, pg.10).

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs are known to influence their teaching practices and management strategies in the classroom, and therefore to directly influence students' learning (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Nader, 1984; Smith, 2000; Winter, 1995). In particular, a teacher's beliefs about the learning capacity of a student with disability may determine the extent to which the teacher is willing to make adjustments to teaching method, curriculum, or classroom organization, or indeed whether he or she even recognizes that some students in the class do have special needs (Fields, 1995; Salili, 1999; Westwood, 1995). It is now generally accepted that teachers who are required to integrate students with disabilities into their classes must feel confident in their own ability to cope with the situation, and must have some positive expectations about the students' learning potential (Forlin, 1998; Webster, 1999). (Yuen M., Westwood P. 200. Integrating students with special needs in Hong Kong secondary schools : teachers' attitudes and their possible relationship to guidance training, *International Journal of Special Education*2001, Vol 16, No.2,pg.72).

3.Methodology of preparation and development of this paper

3.1.Aims and objectives of the paper. The main aims and objectives are :

- The collecting teachers' thoughts and opinions about the indicators of the learning process.
- The collecting teachers' thoughts and opinions about the structure indicators.
- Measuring the attitudes of teachers toward the mainstreaming process.
- The illustration of teacher feedback through the interpretation of some of their answers.

For the realization of this study it is employed a combined methodology. It is used the survey technique. The measuring instrument is the Mainstreaming Opinionnaire (Schmelkin, 1981) to measure teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. It is also employed the technique of interviewing teachers of public schools in which there are integrated disabled

pupils for the purpose of obtaining their opinions related to the existence of necessary conditions to teach them.

3.2.Sampling. The people group in this study consists of teachers from public elementary schools in the cities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopia, Tiranë, Elbasan, Durrës, Korçë and Vlorë. There are used statistics from the General Regional Offices of Education to identify the schools which have pupils with disabilities and to identify the classes in which such pupils have been integrated. The inclusion of the subjects has been realized with respect to the ethical principles that should accompany this process, without forcing anyone into this process and having the permission of the respective authorities. The sample for the study consists of teachers who teach in these public schools. The inclusion criteria include : a)being a public school teacher, b)being involved teachers with different age, c)being involved both male teachers and female teachers, d)involving both teachers and principal teachers, e)involvement of teachers who teach in elementary school and teachers who teach in secondary school, f)the involvement of teachers who have 1-5 years of teaching experience, as well as teachers who have over 20 years of teaching experience. The exclusion criteria include : a)failing to meet at least one of the inclusion criteria, b)the refusal of permission for teachers'participation in the study from the General Regional Offices of Education, c) the refusal of permission for teachers'participation in the study from the respective schools, d)teachers'refusal to be part of the study.

3.3.General data related to the teachers who have completed the MO test. In the study, we had the participation of 408 teachers by completing the MO test. 50 teachers or 12,3% of the teachers participating in the study live in Shkodra city, 40 teachers (9,8%) live in Lezha city, 31 teachers (7,6%) live in Peshkopia city, 59 teachers or 14,5% of the teachers participating in the study live in Kukës city, 34 teachers (8,3%) live in Tirana city, 51 teachers (12,5%) live in Elbasan city, 48 teachers (11,8%) live in Korça city, 56 teachers (13,7%) live in Durrës city and 39 teachers (9,6%) live in Vlora city. The teachers are of different ages. 10 teachers (2,5%) are aged 21-25 years, 60 teachers (14,7%) are aged 26-30 years, 49 teachers (12%) are aged 31-35 years, 77 teachers (18,9%) are aged 36-40 years, 68 teachers (16,7%) are aged 41-45 years, 42 teachers (10,3%) are aged 46-50 years, 39 teachers (9,6%) are aged 51-55 years, 61 teachers (15%) are aged over 55 years, and 2 teachers (0,5%) haven't given their age. In the study participated 53 male teachers (or 13% of teachers participating in the study) and 352 female teachers (86,3%), while 3 teachers (0,7%) haven't given their gender. 167 teachers (40,9%) teach in elementary school and 228 teachers (55,9%) teach in secondary school, while 13 teachers (3,2%) haven't given their teaching cycle. 74 teachers (18,1%) have 1-5 years of teaching experience, 44 teachers (10,8%) have 6-10 years of teaching experience, 50 teachers (12,3%) have 11-15 years of teaching experience, 78 teachers (19,1%) have 16-20 years of teaching experience, 161 teachers (39,5%) have over 20 years of teaching experience, and 1 teacher (0,2%) has not given his years of teaching experience. 26 teachers (6,4%) are teacher principals, 375 (91,9%) are teachers and 7 teachers (1,7%) haven't given their work position. There are not invalid questionnaires. It some be noted that some teachers (about 40 teachers for each city) did not fulfil the questionnaire, while the teachers who fulfilled them, have completed all the elements of the questionnaire.

3.4.General data concerning the teachers and directors who were interviewed and have participated in the focus-group. There have been 69 interviews. There are interviewed

teachers from the cities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopia, Elbasan, Durrës, Korçë, Vlora cities.

3.5.Apparatus / Materials. With the teachers it is employed the Mainstreaming Opinionnaire (MO) (Schmelkin, 1981) to measure their attitudes towards the inclusive education. It is found in the book Antonak R.F., Livneh H.1988. The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities. USA, page 256-262).

3.6.Contents of the questionnaire. A total of 30 items were retained with 15 items scored on each of the two subscales. The first Subscale, Academic Cost of Mainstreaming (ACM), concerned the detrimental effects of mainstreaming on the academic progress on the academic progress of both handicapped and non-handicapped students. The second Subscale, Socio-Emotional Costs of Segregation (SECS), concerned the negative effects on social and emotional development of segregating handicapped children in special classrooms (Antonak R.F., Livneh H. 1988. The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities. USA, pg.256).

3.7.Method of completing the questionnaire. The questionnaires have been filled out by the teachers themselves. The questionnaires were distributed in the respective schools. The administration of the questionnaires (distribution and collection) was conducted during the months of September, October, November and December.

3.8.Method of analysis. The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. It is estimated the reliability of the test. The internal reliability of ACM Subscale Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,834. The internal reliability of SECS Subscale Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,822. It is carried out the coding of the variables according to the respective rules defined by the authors. There are created respective indexes according to the guidelines. Each of the 30 items on the MO is responded to on a six-point scale, ranging from -3, to signify “Disagree very strongly”, to +3, to signify “Agree very strongly”. To score the MO, the value of four is added to each response. This transforms all values to a positive whole number from 1 to 7 (eg., -3=1, -2=2, -1=3, missing=4, +1=5, +2=6, and +3=7). The respondent’s score on the ACM subscale is calculated by adding the responses to the items : 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, and 30. The total is divided by 15 to yield a mean value ranging from 1 to 7, with a low value representing a positive attitude toward this aspect of mainstreaming. The respondent’s score on the SECS subscale is calculated by adding the responses to the remaining 15 items : 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 29). As with the first subscale, a mean value is calculated by dividing the total by 15, with the result ranging from 1 to 7. A positive attitude toward this aspect of mainstreaming, however, is reflected by a high score (Antonak R.F., Livneh H. 1988. The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities. USA, pg.257).

3.9.Content of the interviews. The contents of the interviews was thought in a way as to collect the opinions of teachers concerning :1)the indicators of the structure, 2)the indicators of the learning process. In relation to the structure indicators the paper aims to obtain the teachers’ opinion about : a)the human resources, such as the number of student per class, the existence of the supportive teacher, teachers’ involvement in qualification processes about disability, the existence of other support staff at the school, etc.; b)the structural resources, such as : the existence of laboratories for the disabled students in the school, the existence of the necessary space for them, the existence of didactic materials needed to teach disabled

children. In relation to the indicators of learning process, the paper aims to obtain the teachers' opinion about : a)the existence of an individualized education plan for the disabled student, b)the relationship between schools and other support institutions, c)the relationship between the school and other schools. The content of interviews is based on the book Gherardini P., Nocera S, AIPD (2000) "L'integrazione scolastica delle persone Down", Erickson.

3.10.Piloting stage. It is realised the piloting phase. In this phase the internal reliability of MO opinionnaire Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,812. It is not evidenced any item of the opinionnaire that has low reliability. So, the realization of the study was possible. The dependent variables are the ACM and SECS scores. The independent variables are teachers' demographic factors.

4.Findings of the study

4.1.Teachers' thoughts and opinions about the indicators of the learnig process

The teachers have these opinions in relation to the indicators of learning process : In general, doesn't exist the individualized education plan for the disabled students, but in some cases it exists. The schools relations with other institutions are good. The teachers appreciate especially the cooperation with the physicians about the various problems of their students. Teachers claim that they collaborate with their colleagues of the other schools. They collaborate with teachers who know each other, but there is not institutional relationship between the schools. The teachers consider as necessary the scholastic integration of disabled students, because their integration makes them feel equal with the rest of society. The teachers, however, argue that the process of inclusive education is accelerated, because there are many difficulties in his implementation and, as a result, a good portion of teachers think that would be better a special school for these students, with the appropriate conditions and with an academic specialized staff.

4.2.Teachers' thoughts and opinions about the structure indicators

The teachers have such opinions about the structure indicators : The number of students in the classes where are integrated disabled children is the same, in general, as the number of students in the classes where aren't integrated disabled children. Teachers, in general, think that the number of students in classes with disabled children integrated should be smaller than in other classes. In general, there is not the support teacher in the schools where are integrated disabled students. The teachers appreciate to much the role of the caretaker teacher in their teaching work with disabled children. The teachers appreciate, also, the interaction and the cooperation that exist between them and the caretaker teacher. The teachers, in general, claim they are not recently involved in the qualification processes about disability. They think that need to be trained about disability. There is a psychologist, in general, in the schools. There are schools where there is not a psychologist and the teachers want the presence of the school psychologist. The teachers appreciate the psychologist role in the schools where the psychologist is present. The psychologist helps the teachers in their process of teaching disabled students. There is, also, other auxiliary personnel in the schools, such a dentist and the nurse. The teachers claim that don't exist laboratories for these students. Most of the teachers think that there is no space needed for students with disabilities. Even those teachers who say that exists the needed space, think that this space is not appropriate for disabled students. There is not a resource center in relation to the disability at the schools. The schools

libraries have a few books about disability. The teachers, also, think that there are no specific didactic materials to teach students with special needs. The teachers, in some cases, prepare themselves these materials.

4.3. Teachers' attitudes toward the mainstreaming process

Regarding the ACM subscale, the mean is 4,55. This fact indicates that, in general, teachers have not a good attitude concerned the effects of mainstreaming on the students' academic progress. The values range from 1,40 (0,2% of the teachers participating in the study), to 6,87 (0,2% of the teachers participating in the study). The most of the obtained results is ranked in the range of values from 4 to 6,87 (301 teachers or 73,8%), while a small fraction of the values obtained ranged in the range of values from 1,40 to 4 (107 teachers or 26,2%). Regarding the SECS subscale, the mean is 4,61. The values range from 1,93 (0,2% of the teachers participating in the study) to 7 (0,2% of the teachers participating in the study). So, the teachers, in general, have positive attitude about socio-emotional costs of segregation. The most of the obtained results is ranked in the range of values from 4 to 6 (270 teachers or 66,1%), while a small part of the obtained values is ranked in the range of values from 6 to 7 (28 teachers or 6,9%).

4.4. The illustration of teacher feedback through the interpretation of some of their answers

Teachers' opinions about inclusive education are illustrated by interpreting some of their answers.

Table 4.1. The results of teachers' opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 1, 3, 4, 16, 20, 26

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total
N.1	46	26	84	135	41	68	8	408
N.3	40	13	72	127	68	76	12	408
N.4	19	11	49	118	82	121	8	408
N.16	10	12	47	102	92	137	8	408
N.20	107	47	116	81	24	32	1	408
N.26	54	37	80	120	59	51	7	408

Table 4.2. The results of teachers' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 1, 3, 4, 16, 20, 26

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total
N.1	11,2%	6,4%	20,6%	33,1%	10%	16,7%	2%	100%

N.3	9,8%	3,2%	17,7%	31,1%	16,7%	18,6%	2,9%	100%
N.4	4,7%	2,7%	12%	28,9%	20%	29,7%	2%	100%
N.16	2,5%	2,9%	11,5%	25%	22,5%	33,6%	2%	100%
N.20	26,2%	11,6%	28,4%	19,9%	5,9%	7,8%	0,2%	100%
N.26	13,2%	9,1%	19,6%	29,4%	14,5%	12,5%	1,7%	100%

In relation the first item “The presence of a handicapped child in the regular classroom reduces teaching efficiency and learning”, 244 teachers (59,8% of teachers) consent this fact. In relation the item 3 “Special class pupils fail to make appropriate academic progress when they are integrated into the regular classroom”, 271 teachers (66,4% of teachers) consent this fact. In relation the item 4 “The shorter attention span of handicapped students makes them unable to benefit from placement in a regular classroom”, 321 teachers (78,6% of teachers) consent this fact. In relation to the item 16, “The handicapped child in the regular classroom consumes too much of the teacher’s time and attention”, 331 teachers (81,1% of the teachers) approve this fact. In relation to the item 20 “The presence of a handicapped child in a regular classroom inhibits the progress of his or her non-handicapped peers”,137 teachers (33,6% of the teachers) approve this fact. In relation to the item 26 “The range of abilities confronting a regular teacher when handicapped students are present in the class reduces the effectiveness of the teacher”, 230 teachers (56,4% of the teachers) approve this fact.

Data about teachers’ opinions for the elements 1, 3, 4, 16, 20, 26, 27, 8, 12, 18, 28 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.1. The results of teachers’ opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 1, 3, 4, 16, 20, 26

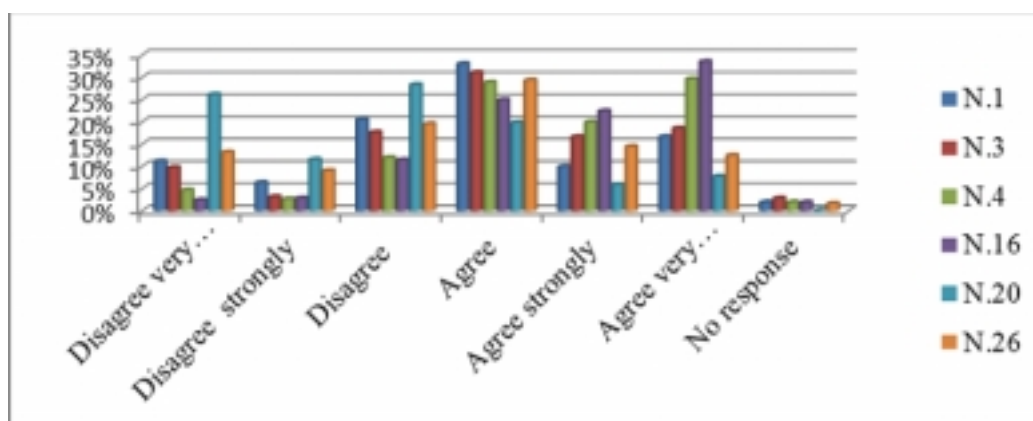


Table 4.3. The results of teachers’ opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 27, 8, 12, 18, 28

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total

N.27	37	39	86	115	65	61	5	408
N.8	9	9	43	125	74	145	3	408
N.12	33	8	38	148	88	92	1	408
N.18	41	14	53	161	61	70	8	408
N.28	29	41	80	140	61	49	8	408

In relation to the item 27 “Handicapped children cannot profit greatly from ordinary schooling”, 241 teachers (59,1% of the teachers) approve this fact. In relation to the item 8 “The handicapped child cannot deal with the challenges of a regular class as well as the normal child”, 344 teachers (84,3% of the teachers) approve this fact. In relation to the item 12 “Placing handicapped children in a regular classroom accentuates the differences between them and their non-handicapped peers”, 328 teachers (80,4%) approve this fact. In relation to the item 18 “When placed in a regular class, handicapped children exhibit inappropriate behavior”, 292 teachers (71,6%) approve this fact. In relation to the item 28 “Segregating the handicapped frees normal pupils from restrictions imposed upon them when they are made to interact with the handicapped”, 250 teachers (61,3%) approve this fact.

Table 4.4. The results of teachers’ opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 27, 8, 12, 18, 28

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total
N.27	9%	9,6%	21,1%	28,2%	15,9%	15%	1,2%	100%
N.8	2,2%	2,2%	10,6%	30,7%	18,1%	35,5%	0,7%	100%
N.12	8,1%	2%	9,3%	36,3%	21,6%	22,5%	0,2%	100%
N.18	10%	3,4%	13%	39,5%	15%	17,1%	2%	100%
N.28	7,1%	10%	19,6%	34,3%	15%	12%	2%	100%

Data about teachers’ opinions for the elements 27, 8, 12, 18, 28 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.2. The results of teachers’ opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 27, 8, 12, 18, 28

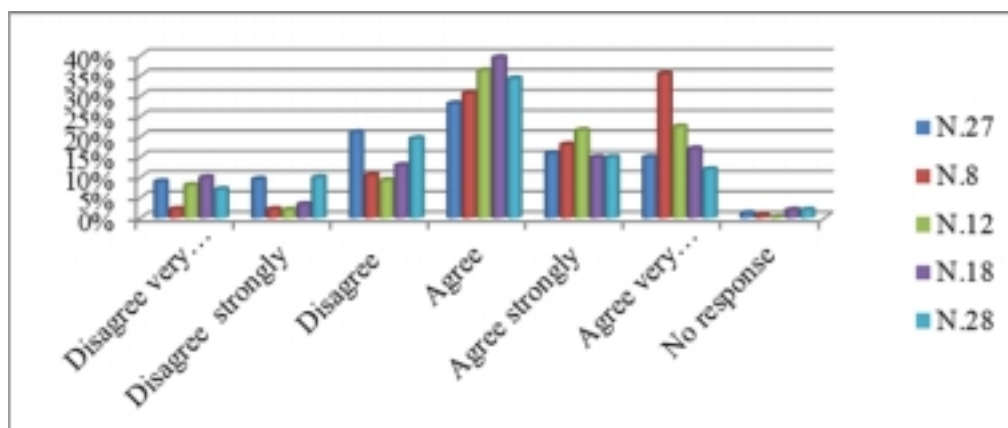


Table 4.5. The results of teachers' opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 15,17 and 23

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total
N.15	34	12	85	127	56	86	8	408
N.17	50	31	119	103	63	38	4	408
N.23	22	13	53	154	94	64	8	408

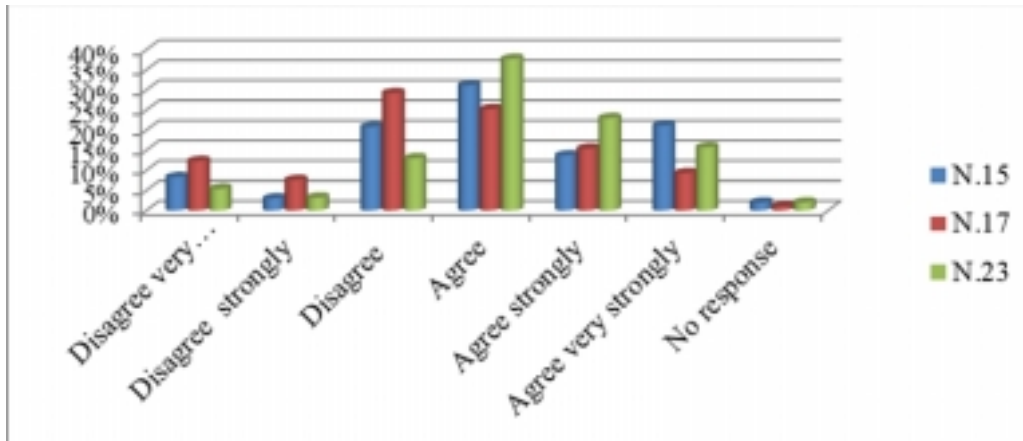
In relation to the item 15 "Special class placement leads to an estrangement between the handicapped and their normal peers", 269 teachers (65,9% of the teachers) approve this fact. In relation to the item 17 "Special class placement results in a loss of self-esteem in the part of handicapped students", 204 teachers (49,9% of the teachers) e approve this fact. In relation to the item 23 "The social status of handicapped children as perceived by their non-handicapped peers will be enhanced through their interaction in regular classrooms", 312 teachers (76,4% of teachers) approve this fact.

Table 4.6. The results of teachers' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the items 15,17 and 23

Item	Disagree very strongly	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Agree very strongly	No response	Total
N.15	8,3%	3%	20,8%	31,1%	13,7%	21,1%	2%	100%
N.17	12,3%	7,6%	29,2%	25,2%	15,4%	9,3%	1%	100%
N.23	5,4%	3,2%	13%	37,7%	23%	15,7%	2%	100%

Data about teachers' opinions for the elements 15, 17 and 23 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.3. The results of teachers' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 15, 17 and 23



5. Conclusions

In general, the teachers have not a good attitude concerned the effects of mainstreaming on the students' academic progress. The teachers consider necessary the improvement of the structure indicators and the improvement of the indicators of learning process. Teachers have wrong perception about their effectiveness when they teach in an inclusive classroom and they have wrong perception about the challenges that disabled children should deal in a regular class, as for example the accentuation of the differences between them and their peers. A considerable part of the teachers think that the presence of a disabled child in the regular classroom consumes too much of the teacher's time and attention and that the shorter attention span of disabled children makes them unable to benefit from placement in a regular classroom. They think that disabled children can't benefit from placement in a regular classroom and that they don't make appropriate academic progress when are integrated into the regular classroom. The teachers, in a large part, have wrong perception about disabled children behavior when they are integrated into a regular classroom and about their interaction with their peers.

They have, in general, positive attitude about socio-emotional costs of segregation. A large part of the teachers think that special class placement leads to an estrangement between the disabled children and their peers, this placement results in a loss of self-esteem in the part of disabled children and that their status as perceived by their peers will be enhanced through their interaction in regular classrooms. They consider as necessary the scholastic integration of disabled students, but they argue that this process is accelerated, because there are many difficulties in his implementation.

6. Recommendations

It is necessary to consider the following recommendations :

- Improving teachers' attitudes concerned the effects of mainstreaming on the students' academic progress.
- Improving teachers' perception about disabled children behavior when they are integrated into a regular classroom.
- Improving teachers' perception about interaction of disabled children with their peers.
- Improving teachers' perception about academic progress of disabled children into the regular classroom.

- A greater involvement of teachers in qualifying processes about disability.
- The improvement of the structure indicators and the improvement of the indicators of learning process.

7.References

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