

**ERD 2017**  
**Education, Reflection, Development, Fifth Edition**

**THE SUPPORT TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE INTEGRATION OF  
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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***Abstract***

The inclusive education paradigm was launched in the 1990s to overcome the integrated education approach (dominating the world over the period 1970-1990) which proved to be narrow and insufficient to ensure the right to education for all children and men. The children's consciousness from the earliest age must be formed and developed by teaching the children that receiving "different" children together with all others should be done not for their sake in the first place and not for mercy for them but for the right of every individual - to participate in joint actions for its further development, in order to contribute to the development of the community in which it lives. Applying more structured and accessible working methods to all partners in education (teachers, parents, pupils) can favor the integration of pupils with special educational needs in ordinary education. By building a customized portfolio, each acquisition can be capitalized, identifying the needs and steps needed for real integration. Through this research, we wanted to identify the teachers' opinions on the specifics of the current working methods / working tools with pupils with special educational needs; identifying a useful working tool in the integrated education of pupils with special educational needs; determining the school results obtained by applying the portfolio of the integrated student with the clear intention of highlighting its effectiveness; identifying the opinion of parents of pupils with special educational needs on how to work with them.

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**Keywords:** Special educational needs, integrated education, inclusive education.



## 1. Introduction

Special education is defined in the work done by UNESCO in 1983 and entitled "Terminology of Special Education" : " The adaptation of the educational process as well as the specific (rehabilitation / recovery) intervention intended for children and people who fail to reach the age-appropriate educational and social levels in general (ordinary) education." Special education provides education for children with learning disabilities or difficulties and their socio-professional integration.

Integrated education implies assimilation of children with special educational needs in the mass educational system, where they are helped to adapt to existing policy, practice and curriculum (Vrăsmaș, 2011). An essential element in this process is that emphasis is placed on the learner, on his / her needs. Special educational needs express an obvious need to give some children additional attention and assistance without which they can not effectively speak of equal opportunities, access and school and social participation. The phrase can have a particular meaning for each learner in the sense that each student is an individual and at some point at one time or another of learning, it requires certain specific educational requirements in order to fully understand and maximize the potential (For example, a student may encounter learning difficulties in mathematics, where, in particular, certain types of thinking operations are needed in which the pupil is deficient, instead, the disciplines in the other curricular areas achieve good results) .

## 2. Problem statement

One of the greatest challenges of the current romanian educational system is inclusive education, a paradigm that implies not only the integration of children with learning difficulties, but also the adaptation of the educational-educational process to the needs and demands of all children, regardless of the level of physical development or psychological background they have or the social environment they come from. Organizational and methodological changes are needed at the general level of the education system as well as at the institution level, the school itself. In the beginning, to most teachers, to the specialists (psychologists, psychologists, doctors, defectologists, sociologists, counselors, etc.), leaders (directors, inspectors, ministers), but also to parents, both normal children and children With special educational needs, integrated education seemed to them, most of them a "utopia" or at best a "noble idea difficult to implement", few of them considered it "something worth trying" (Fullwood, 1990, cited in Ungureanu, 2000, p. 210). In European education systems, children do not feel compelled to come to school, they have a natural relationship with their teachers, there is communication between them and teachers, the students are not stressed, they do not go to school horrified by the amount of matter they have to memorize either by the fear a teacher inspires when he scores 2 or 3 if they did not know how to answer a question. In many European countries, teachers go to classes without a catalog, the learning process takes the form of free discussions with students, they are not examined by "scoring and scoring", but by continuous teacher evaluation, with their own methods For example students who have a constant contribution to the discussion receive a greater number of points). There are also dedicated teachers in Romania who have greatly reduced the distance between the chair and the student's bank, but there is no clear overall strategy for change in this direction. There is a constant concern at the level of legislation but also at the level of education policies, but the education system seems to be undergoing continuous reform. As a support teacher, there are often

problems, both because of the methodology and the teachers. In Romania, there are currently 17,388 pupils with special educational needs and 1310 teachers and the school population with special educational needs is growing. Following the French system, I think it is much better structured, identifying each individual disorder and addressing the needs of each child, not being required to go through the usual curriculum, even if it is integrated into ordinary schools (Angelino, 2001, Chaulet, 2007, Guyoto, 2008).

A growing category of school population is not taken into account, namely those children who come to Romania and do not know Romanian language are trained in ordinary classes without educational support outside the classroom. In the absence of effective solutions to work with diverse student groups, teachers try to level up grades or ignore children with special needs. The neglect of children with special needs is also explained by the pressure of parents of ordinary children who want good results from children at various school and extra-school competitions. In addition, the prestige of the school and the teacher is greater if it is oriented towards performance. If such difficulties are not overcome, the purpose of inclusion will be affected, namely to help students learn new behaviors, knowledge, skills that will be useful in their social integration. The many political, social, cultural, technological and economic changes in contemporary society influence the learning process that schools / training centers need to achieve. Changes in learners and the teaching and learning environment make it necessary to reorganize learning processes.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

Based on the premise that effective integration implies a number of actors (parents, teachers) and different working methods, the scope of research refers to the implementation of good European practices of integrated education / school inclusion helps the teacher support in making the learning process more efficient Pupils with special educational needs. The objectives deriving from the proposed goal are:

- a. Identifying teachers' opinions on the specifics of current working methods / working tools with pupils with special educational needs.
- b. Identifying a useful working tool in the integrated education of pupils with special educational needs
- c. Establishment of the school results obtained after applying the integrated pupil's portfolio with the clear intent to highlight its effectiveness.
- d. Identifying the parents' opinion with special educational needs on how to work with them

### **4. Research Questions**

- A. The use of the integrated student portfolio allows the student to receive the correct radiography during the school year.
- B. The use of the integrated pupil portfolio leads to significant school progress in urban and rural students
- C. using the integrated pupil's portfolio facilitates the increase of the acquisition of students with special educational needs
- D. the use of the integrated pupil portfolio generates a better collaboration among the actors involved in the educational act (parent, class teacher, support teacher)

- E. Using the integrated student portfolio leads to a decrease in the incidence of behavioral disorders

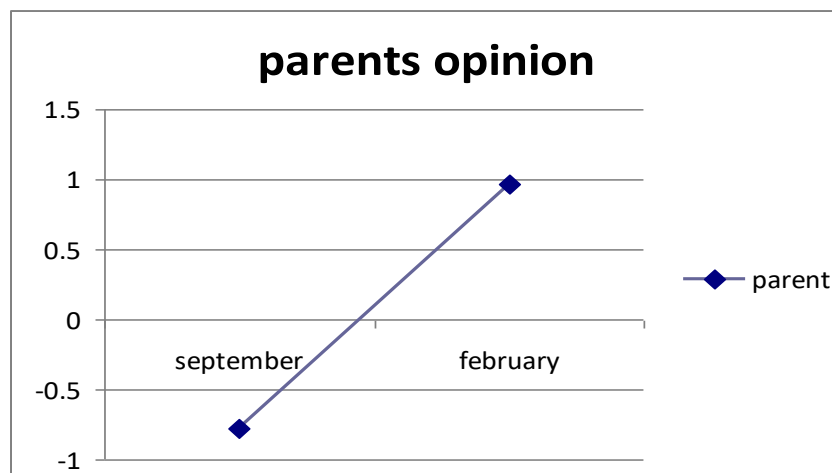
## **5. Research Methods**

The research was carried out in Neamț county, where: 20 support teachers, 100 teachers of mass education who enrolled pupils with special educational needs, 215 parents of pupils with special educational needs integrated in the mainstream education, 224 pupils with special educational needs integrated into mainstream education.

During our research, a questionnaire was applied to parents and a questionnaire for support teachers and teaching staff, working with pupils with special educational requirements. The questionnaires were applied once at the beginning of the research, when pupils and teachers did not benefit from the existence of the integrated pupil portfolio and once upon the end of the work, after all the actors of the educational education (pupils, teachers, parents) have benefited from a unitary way of working through the existence and application of the integrated pupil portfolio.

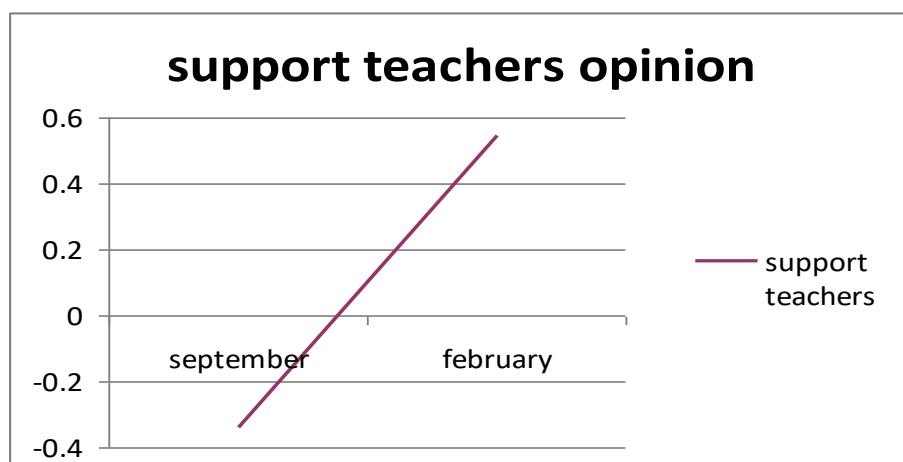
## **6. Findings**

From September to October 2016, the parents of the students were asked to participate in our research. They had to select to what agree or disagree with some statements. Likert scale was used at the response: Total disagreement - disagreement or disagreement - agreement - total agreement. For their processing and interpretation, the 5 levels will be assigned scores: 2, 1, 0, -1, -2, given that the statements are favorable. We can observe that, initially, the total picture of the school integration of children with special educational needs is negative, being -0,776, having more negative appreciations than positive ones. After applying the personalized portfolio, parents seem to change their attitude towards school, teachers, and working methods with their children. Following the answers given at the end of the first semester, the total score is 0.963, which directs responses to neutral and agreement responses. It can be appreciated that the application of the portfolio has improved the view of parents regarding the integration of children with special educational needs in mass education.



**Figure 01.** Parents' opinion from questionnaires offered in September and February

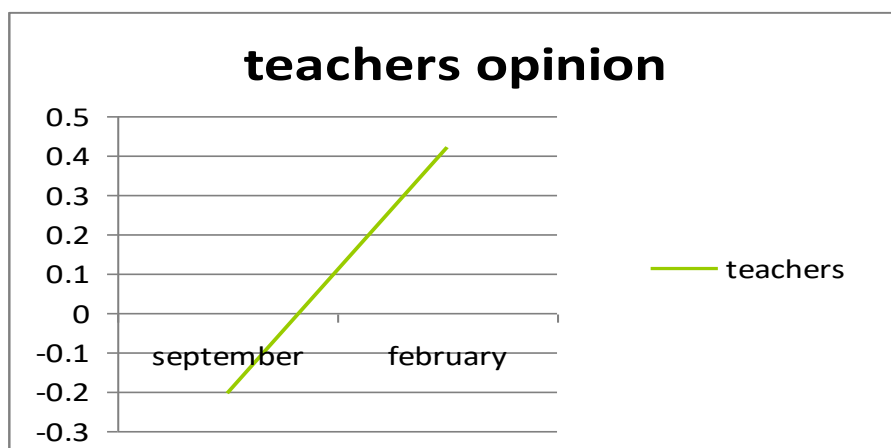
Similar to the parental questionnaire, teachers support have chosen the most appropriate option for their situation, using the 5-step Likert scale, starting from total disagreement; disagreement; Neither agreement nor disagreement; agreement; Total agreement. The overall level was determined by the arithmetic mean of the 15 items and resulted in a figure of -0.34. This is due either to the lack of sufficiently structured material to clearly highlight the purchases, the progress or regression of the child or the lack of conditions in school units. Following the results of February 2017, the global level calculated by arithmetic mean reached a result of 0.546. The media tends to positively after applying the pupil's portfolio with special educational requirements, we can see that the relationship with both teachers and teachers has improved.



**Figure 02.** Support teachers opinion from questionnaires offered in September and February

Teachers in mass education also had to select a set of statements. After centralizing the information provided, overall scoring at the end of the first stage is -0.204. This score demonstrates that the teachers' opinion of inclusion is rather a non-acceptance. The fact that the necessary conditions have not been created

or the working materials are insufficient make them at least reluctant to integrate. At the end of the survey, the overall level was calculated and is 0.421. We can state that, following the application of the pupil's portfolio with special educational requirements, the teachers' opinion regarding the integration of pupils with special educational needs was an acceptance. The relationship with parents has been improved by its active involvement in the educational act, while reducing the incidence of behavioral disturbances by attracting them into specific activities and valorising their outcomes.



**Figure 03.** Teachers opinion from questionnaires offered in September and February

## 7. Conclusions

Analyzing the results obtained, we can say that the implementation of good European best practices in integrated education / school inclusion helps the teacher support in streamlining the learning process for pupils with special educational needs. By applying a structured portfolio to include the elements necessary for the detailed knowledge of the child both from the point of view of personal data and the level of purchases, we can structure much more easily the notions to be acquired. At the same time, the other pupils also come to know the positive aspects of the pupil's personality with special educational requirements establishing relations of collegiality and friendship.

Collectively accepting a child with different problems that can influence schooling is very important for other students as the spirit of cooperation and acceptance develops. Thus, children are much better acquainted, and the socialization process forms new attributes by removing communication barriers determined by certain preconceived ideas. Parents of integrated pupils often accept any form of integration, only to be admitted to the ordinary school. The model proposed by us focuses not only on pupils but also on parents. Involvement of parents leads to a better understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs. But a number of barriers to research have been identified: the fact that parents have limited schooling; have preconceived ideas; they in turn adopt a conflicting attitude in terms of education and teachers, most often led to influencing student behavior with special educational needs and influencing the degree of integration. By introducing this portfolio, parents have better control over the level of purchases, on school progress, because education does not end at school. As far as the attitude of the teachers is concerned, they have a favorable attitude towards integration if there is also the involvement of

the support teacher. Even though the education system supports the integration of pupils, it does not provide enough resources to make effective integration for pupils with special educational needs. The biggest problem emerging from the research is that the real time allocated for educational support is only two hours. This is ineffective because a student with special educational needs often needs permanent guidance. As collectives are increasingly numerous, the teacher / teacher's attention is more devoted to other pupils, and those with special educational needs are not effectively integrated into the college and marginalized, even without the teacher's will. There are situations in the cadres that the teacher refuses to collaborate with the sprinter teacher, to the detriment of the child. It does not benefit from all the services it needs, either due to misinformation or incorrect information or by the self-reliance of some teachers. There are situations in which pupils with deep or severe mental deficiency are integrated, with associated and other deficiencies. Then many more factors come in, the student needs permanent support. Its integration into ordinary education is difficult to carry out as long as it has no educational support at all times in order to allow other children to benefit from the teacher. The needs of a student with multiple deficiencies are much higher than that of an average student. And introducing it into a college of 30 students does not bring any benefit to anyone. By introducing this portfolio, all students are effectively and emotionally involved in the learning process, putting all pupils together to collaborate and get to know each other. Using this method of work has made the whole team change their attitude. They have become a united team, have created friendship, support in teaching, valorizing the strengths of each and not revealing negative behaviors or the disadvantages of some of them.

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