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PARTICIPANTS IN EDUCATION OF PUPILS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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Abstract:

Three important subjects are always involved in the education of pupils with special educational needs – the pupil's family (and, of course, the pupil himself/herself), the school and school counselling centres. They try to ensure that the educational process is as appropriate as possible, taking into account the pupil's abilities, skills, but also the limits based on his/her type and degree of disadvantage. Pupils may be educated in special schools or in mainstream schools. Both educational pathways bring with them certain positives, but also risks.

The aim of this text will be to highlight the need for a functional relationship between all the different actors in the educational process for pupils with hearing impairment and to bring these key actors closer together in ensuring the pupil's school success, regardless of the choice of type of educational institution.

Keywords:

Family, hearing impairment, inclusion, mainstream school, pedagogical-psychological counseling, special pedagogical center

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Introduction

Pupils with hearing impairments can be educated in special and inclusive schools. Inclusion and equal access to education for all pupils with special educational needs is a very important trend in the field of special education. Inclusive education and appropriate conditions for all entail certain conditions and requirements not only for the school in which the pupil is educated. School counselling centres are also key actors, providing support to the aforementioned school institution, but also to the family and the pupil themselves. The pupil with special educational needs and his or her immediate family make up the total number of participants in inclusive education.

All of the above are important for the proper and functional provision of inclusive education. Two-way communication between the different actors and the creation of partnerships affects the success of the student in the educational process. Outlining this issue for pupils with hearing impairment and highlighting the possible risks faced by the different actors will be the aim of this text.

1. Family of a child with hearing impairment

Parents of a child with a hearing impairment are most often hearing (literature reports upwards of 90 %). When choosing an appropriate educational pathway, these parents are faced with the question of mainstream schools (i.e. schools similar to those in which they were also educated) or special schools. In the latter, education is provided in the presence of subject-matter experts (in this case, special educator for the hearing impaired), the use of specially adapted textbooks and the provision of education in a communication system suitable for this specific group of pupils. The family is assisted in choosing a school (and an adequate method of communication) by the school counselling staff. (Hádková, 2016)

Choosing an appropriate and functional communication system positively influences the development of the child's personality, thus also preventing the state of early languagelessness. In this case, the child does not develop in any communication system. Unfortunately, in practice, we quite often encounter late diagnosis of a hearing defect and, therefore, its compensation. Greater awareness of the recognition of hearing loss and early detection would help to prevent this phenomenon. (Strnadová, 1998)

For a child with a hearing impairment, it is not only the family that is important in socialization. When parents become involved in the life of the Deaf community with their child, they are the ones who become an integral part of the life of the whole family. Deaf people are not only carriers of Czech sign language, they also pass on their history, customs and traditions. Many foreign authors (e.g. Edwards, 2020; Akach, Woodford, 2000) talk about the pivotal role of the Deaf community and their influence on the child's development as a full member of this group. The life of the Deaf community includes many organizations focused on children, and certain associations also specialize in sports, art, or theatre. (Hádková, 2016)

Community life and attachment is, of course, more natural for children whose parents are hearing impaired themselves and are already part of this group. However, they too face the question of their child's future educational path – special schools for the hearing impaired were often already attended by the parents themselves, but their children may also be educated in mainstream schools. It all depends on their decision, but also on the child's abilities and skills. Equally important is the compensation for the hearing loss – the issue of cochlear implants tends

to be received quite negatively by certain individuals in the Deaf community and often becomes a friction point in the discussion.

Regardless of the choice of educational institution, there must be functional communication between parents and the teaching staff (or school management). The common goal of parents and school representatives is the success of the pupil; therefore, mutual support and interconnectedness between the two socialisation components is indeed crucial.

In the education of pupils with hearing impairment, we must choose appropriate communication channels when communicating with each other. In the case of face-to-face meetings – class meetings, consultations with teachers, meetings during school activities – we assume normal communication for hearing parents in mainstream schools. However, if the parents (and consequently the pupil) choose a different communication system (most often Czech sign language), a Czech sign language interpreter should be present. Communication via email, school website or SMS messages is often an appropriate way to convey information to both sets of parents. However, for some parents with a hearing impairment, we can expect to see specific errors in written expression – whether it is a problem with incorrect endings, omitted letters or incorrect word order. Therefore, when a child starts school, both parties should agree on functional communication, ensuring that they understand each other.

If the pupil is placed in a school for the hearing impaired, we assume the presence of native users of both Czech and Czech sign language. Communication should therefore be as natural as possible between all parties involved. In addition to the methods already mentioned, for example, the school's website will have text information as well as a video with translation into Czech sign language.

In relation to the individual educational institutions and their cooperation with the family (parents of the pupil), certain problems arise from the parents, the teaching staff and the overall view of the relationship between the family and the school. Rabušicová et al. (2004) focused their research on the parent group and the relationship with their child's educational institution. Six categories emerge from this investigation that may be problematic in building rapport and functional communication.

1. The risk of exclusivity in the parent group

When families and schools work together, the same families, most often classified as middle and upper class, may be involved repeatedly. Being aware of this issue and involving more parents from different socio-economic backgrounds, different ethnicities and different cultures enriches the school and classroom collective, as well as can encourage greater participation in school events by parents.

2. Lack of time on the part of parents

The current times bring with it quite a lot of pressure on productivity and workload. However, parents should always make time to interact with the school, to be involved in their child's activities, whether in extracurricular activities or home preparation.

3. Gender differences

The mother is more likely to be involved in interactions with the school. Fathers come to the school when there is a more serious problem related to school performance or when their child has repeated problematic behaviour. However, within the educational process, the participation of both parents and their influence on the child's school performance is central to our work.

Fathers may be more needed, for example, in construction modifications of the classroom, and they may be invited to the school during career days when they can introduce their work to the class and prepare activities related to their profession.

4. Less parental participation at the upper level

This is relatively easy to explain – at the beginning of compulsory schooling, parents want to support their child and ensure that they enjoy going to school. Similarly, from first to fifth grade, parents understand the subject matter that the child is learning and can therefore help the child with this. Upper level already brings with it more specialist subjects, in which parents may no longer be proficient. In addition, their child becomes more independent and less dependent on their parents as they develop. If necessary, teachers should be prepared to help parents, to introduce the subject matter to them and to help them so that they are able to work with their child in the context of home preparation.

5. Teachers' workload

All of the above factors bring with them a certain workload for teachers beyond their normal teaching work. Without a two-way relationship and functional communication with parents, it is quite challenging to constantly initiate parental involvement in school activities and participation in the educational process.

6. Insufficient preparation of teachers to work with parents

Building and maintaining a good relationship with parents is a cornerstone of school success for all students entering the educational process. However, in the context of higher education, faculties of education do not provide sufficient development of competences for creating, building and maintaining relationships with parents, primarily in the areas of pathological phenomena, problematic behaviour and dealing with these situations. In the future, it would certainly be advisable to call for greater support and development of these competences already within the framework of university; however, teachers themselves should also seek out courses, learn to work with parents and pay attention to families from different cultural backgrounds.

7. Tradition

Certain parent groups may still perceive the school as a closed institution where they attend class meetings and solve current problems, but they are no longer involved beyond these activities. The school should ideally be a community hub, involving parents and extended family in activities suitable for all parent groups.

The factors outlined above place great demands on the various actors in the educational process. It is therefore really important to work together, to understand the different needs of the different participants and to give them the time, knowledge and competence to ensure a successful education.

2. Inclusive school vs. Special school

The issue of dual educational pathways for pupils with hearing impairments has already been addressed above. Inclusive schools and education with hearing peers prepare pupils more for the realities of life in a hearing society. Certain educational specifics are necessary for the education of this group of pupils – for example, skipping listening exercises in the case of language learning, they may also have a higher time allocation to take tests or rely more on text-based materials. Similarly, there may be adjustments in the placement of students in the

classroom (ideally, the first/second desk in the middle row). If a Czech sign language interpreter is present, he/she must also always be positioned appropriately, ideally so that the pupil can follow him/her and also have the teacher in his/her field of vision and thus be able to respond directly to the teacher's interpretation. In teaching it is necessary to follow the principles of communication with a person with a hearing impairment – keep a distance of up to 4 metres, do not turn your back when speaking, do not gesticulate in front of your mouth and ideally do not walk around the classroom. This ensures that the pupil's visual perception of spoken speech - i.e. lip reading – is supported as much as possible.

The interpreter, already mentioned several times, should be present when working with the pupil's family and their possible participation in school activities in the case of deaf parents. The acceptance of a pupil with a different communication system is greatly helped by bringing him/her closer to the life of the Deaf community, or perhaps by inviting the Deaf parent to the classroom or to participate in a cultural event. It is also recommended that the teaching staff and the class team teach the pupil the basics of Czech sign language. The presence of communication and social barriers is common among these pupils. However, learning the basics of a different method of communication, getting closer to the community life of Czech Deaf people and considering the pupil as a full and equal partner in the classroom collective can greatly facilitate inclusive education and ensure a suitable classroom climate. Unfortunately, in practice, we tend to encounter cases of pathological behaviour – pupils with hearing impairment are marginalised in the classroom and are also targets of bullying. The phenomenon of exclusion in this group then often leads to a transfer to another school or even a return to a special school.

Special schools for the hearing impaired tend to be a more closed community, providing education in the presence of professionals and native users for the communication system of the hearing impaired. In addition to this specificity, schooling is usually extended by one year – the first grade is most often divided into two years (or the tenth year is used to repeat and consolidate the material discussed in the previous years).

The total number of schools for pupils with hearing impairments is 13. However, most schools no longer only accept pupils with hearing impairments, but also focus on pupils with impaired communication skills who are educated in different classes. In addition to pupils with hearing impairments, schools may also admit pupils with combined impairments, in which case it is a hearing impairment combined with some other type. (Hádková, 2016)

Parental involvement in special education tends to be quite natural for parents with hearing impairment – they are familiar with the communication system, have often attended the school themselves, or meet others at various community events. However, Edwards (2020) presents the other side of the parent group – hearing parents. In almost all schools designed specifically for students with hearing loss, both hearing and deaf teachers are present. However, the pupil is expected to develop language competence in both communication systems, so it is quite crucial to have support in language development also in the home environment. Thus, hearing parents should know at least the basics of sign language, while deaf parents should provide support in learning Czech.

Mutual understanding is also a key prerequisite for mutual cooperation and participation of parents not only in their child's education but also in other school activities. However, the parent group tends to be very homogeneous – in their communication systems, socio-economic background, time commitment and also the interest they take in their child's education.

Rabušicová et al. (2004) have addressed the issue of different types of parents in considerable detail and present this classification into four subgroups:

1. Parents as clients

We understand both sides of the communication (parents and teachers) as experts in the educational process. This group of parents, when choosing a school, places great emphasis on what the school can offer their child and how it will meet all their needs. Moreover, parents can also be part of the school management and internally influence the development of the institution.

2. Parents as partners

The family supports the pupil in his/her home preparation, significantly enters into the educational process and communicates functionally with the school. Parents can act as educational partners, acting as assistants at various school events. We understand social partners as parents who support the development of the school as an institution, who are also more involved in civic and parent associations at the school.

3. Parents as citizens

This type of parents is based on the relationship between citizens and the institution. Parent groups are involved in civic participation, community life of the school and the running of the institution itself.

4. Parents as problem

This last group of the classification of parents is further divided into three subgroups. The first are independent parents. They maintain minimal contact with the school, quite often because of the different values of the two institutions. For parents, however, the development of their child and his/her positive relationship with the school remains a priority.

The second are the bad parents. They are generally uninterested in education and do not communicate with the school. This subgroup also includes people on the margins of society (drug addicts, alcoholics, seriously ill) and people from other cultural backgrounds. Bad parents are also those who lack social competence and are unable to ask questions when they do not understand something and may therefore appear to be insufficiently involved in the relationship with their child's school.

A relatively specific third subgroup is the diligent parents. They communicate with teachers very frequently, have constant questions and are very interested in their child's educational process. Such frequent communication can be time-consuming for teachers, who may perceive the high level of interest from parents as an attempt to gain an advantage for their child or interpret the frequent questions as questioning their work. (Rabušicová et al., 2004)

Given that parents of pupils with special educational needs choose a school based on the support, services, aids and adaptations to the educational process, parents of pupils with hearing impairments would definitely be classified as clients. This is precisely what Rabušicová et al. (2004) - in the chapter on special education – illustrate.

We would also expect parents of pupils with different types of disabilities to be more involved in the educational process, to communicate more frequently with teachers and to cooperate with each other in solving possible current problems. In addition, a teaching assistant or a Czech

sign language interpreter may also be present at these meetings; together they noticeably influence the overall course of the educational process.

3. School counseling facilities

School counselling centres are responsible for choosing the suitable school and providing support to the family and the educational institution. They build on the work of early childhood centres. They provide support for the youngest children (up to 7 years old) and it is the staff of these centres who help the family in the most difficult beginnings when a disability is diagnosed, assisting in the correct direction in dealing with possible compensation or obtaining contributions for compensatory aids. The early care workers also provide the family with a list of suitable communication systems, and recommend organisations focused on teaching Czech sign language. These are, for example, Pevnost (<https://www.pevnost.com/>), Trojrozměř (<http://www.trojrozmer.cz/>) or the organisation Tichý svět (Silent World; <https://www.tichysvet.cz/>). Early care is provided throughout the country by the Centre for Children's Hearing – Tamtam (<https://www.tamtam.cz/>).

School counselling facilities include special education centres and pedagogical-psychological counselling centres. Special education centres cater for pupils with different types of disabilities – most centres specialise in one type of disability, often located within or close to the school complex. The centres have standard services across all types of disadvantage – they provide counselling, diagnostics, support the family and the pupil with special educational needs during the process of choosing an educational pathway and are therefore an integral part of addressing the issue of inclusive education. In addition, special education centres for people with hearing impairment provide support in the development of communication (whether oral or visual), reading or training in the use of compensatory aids. In addition, the centres provide cooperation with other specialists – psychologists, phoniatrists, specialists from cochlear care centres. They can also provide different therapy sessions for the family to deal with crisis situations, family therapy, or therapy in the presence of another professional.

Pedagogical-psychological counseling centers are dedicated to the comprehensive diagnosis of the pupil – psychological, social and special-educational. Together with the centres, they are crucial for the choice of education of a pupil with special educational needs, they are also important in the issue of career counselling, school deferment, and they provide support to teachers in the field of prevention of risky behaviour. When dealing with the presence of pathological phenomena at school, counsellors work with the classroom team and carry out a diagnosis of the social climate in the classroom – on the basis of this, they can better understand the dynamics and hierarchy in the relationships between classmates and provide remedies for inappropriate behaviour among individual pupils. The aforementioned phenomenon of exclusion is common among pupils with hearing impairments, and the presence and intervention of the staff of the pedagogical-psychological counselling centre can help these pupils to be accepted into the classroom team or to transfer to another school.

The special education centres and pedagogical-psychological counselling centres also work with the schools themselves where the pupil with special educational needs is placed. Many teachers may not have encountered this type of disadvantage in their teaching practice and therefore do not know what to expect and how to prepare for the arrival of a pupil. Staff can recommend appropriate didactic aids to the school's teaching staff, lend suitable literature and ensure that the transition is as easy as possible for both the pupil and the school's teachers. In addition, the staff of the centres and counselling centres also travel to the schools, are present

during the school day and can thus recommend to the teachers on the spot appropriate solutions to specific teaching situations and point out certain risks in the education of the pupil concerned. Since a pupil with special educational needs is always assigned to a certain level of support measures, the staff of the centres and counselling centres always update these individual needs in order to match his/her current abilities and skills; for this reason, the outreach service of the school counselling centres is also very important. (Michalík, Baslerová, Felcmanová et al., 2015)

4. Placement of the pupil in a mainstream school

In the previous chapters, the three actors important for the educational journey of a pupil with special educational needs – the family, the school and the school counselling centre – were introduced. The actual decision in choosing a school rests with the family, specifically the parents (or other legal representatives) of the child. At the centre of the final decision is, of course, the hearing impaired pupil's own abilities and skills.

In the case of the choice of mainstream school, parents work closely with the aforementioned special education centre (or educational and psychological counselling centre). Each pupil is diagnosed by a member of staff at the centre and – based on their abilities, skills and areas in need of support – they are then placed in one of five levels of support. Pupils are usually diagnosed before entering school and are placed in a specific level of support. Although the choice of school is in the hands of the parents, the decision to place a pupil in a school is made by the head teacher. By admitting the pupil, the school management undertakes to comply with all the support measures and specifics based on the particular hearing impairment of the pupil – adjustment of the teaching regime, seating arrangements, use of special aids. The classroom environment should also be adapted – appropriate lighting and soundproofing of the room.

The course of the educational day itself must correspond to the educational specifics of the pupil based on the nature of the hearing impairment itself – specific errors in the Czech language, mishearings when listening in Czech and foreign language. (Barvíková et al., 2015)

In the case of inclusive education, the pupil's family has to prepare for significant support in the case of home preparation for lessons, frequent contact with teachers, teaching assistants (if necessary, Czech sign language interpreters) and school counselling staff (but also other professionals – educational counsellors, school special educator).

The school itself must prepare quite thoroughly for the arrival of a pupil with various special educational needs. A catalogue of support measures can be of great help (see Barvíková et al., 2015), and the book by Tannenbergerová (2016) can also be of support. The latter presents 4 thematic areas – culture, conditions, practices and sessions. The author presents individual indicators based on these areas. Table 1 provides an overview of these individual indicators.

Table 1 - Indicators of an inclusive school

Culture	Conditions	Practices	Session
The school accepts all pupils	The school budget takes into account items that support inclusion	Individual education strategy is created for all pupils who need it	Signals about who to communicate with, about what and when can be found in the school premises and on the school website
Every student is important	All school classes are heterogeneous	A variety of didactic methods are used effectively and naturally	The teacher-parent relationship at the school can be characterized as a partnership
Pupils do not leave school for practical or special schools	The school provides ongoing training for all its teaching staff in working effectively with a diverse classroom	Pupils are co-creators of their educational process	Teachers regularly attend each other's lessons
If a pupil is not successful in education, the solution is sought in support measures	School and leisure activities/events are accessible to all pupils regardless of family background or disability	Pupil progress, i.e. change from previous status, forms the core of pupil assessment	The school can be characterised as a 'community hub' for the locality
Every member of the school community feels welcome	The school has resources for working with children with special needs	Much is expected from every pupil	Teachers systematically guide pupils to help each other
The school works with the school's inclusion strategy as a "living document"	The school has a teaching assistant(s)	Involving all pupils in inclusive learning is a priority in lessons	Bullying is dealt with in a preventive and systematic way throughout the school
At first glance, it is evident that the school includes "inclusive elements"	The school does not have a selective class	The teaching assistant supports the learning and engagement of all pupils in the class	The teaching assistant is seen as a full member of the teaching staff
Inclusive approach is seen as a natural part of the school's functioning, not as an alternative	The school does not have a special class	Pupil assessment contributes to the achievement of the goals set for the pupil	Teachers regularly collaborate in planning lessons
Working in heterogeneous collectives is considered a natural part of teaching	The school is wheelchair accessible	Pupils mostly cooperate with each other during classes	Visitors to the school (especially parents) can take part in lessons under prearranged conditions

Teachers believe that it is appropriate for all groups of pupils to be educated in their school	Pupils are free to move around the school	When an individual educational strategy is formulated for a pupil, all relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the process	The school website includes a clear invitation to communicate and to collect suggestions, ideas and feedback
Teachers believe that it is essential for children to learn in heterogeneous groups	The receptivity to school visits is already noticeable when they arrive at school	The school organises opportunities for effective homework at school	Teachers feel supported by the school management
			School leadership regularly shares and consults with teachers their decisions and visions

Source: Tannenbergerová (s. 57-58, 63-64, 68-69, 74-75, 2016)

The table shows all the areas of the educational institution that the school needs to focus on. Whether it is material or personnel factors, everyone in the school receives mutual support, open communication and appropriate solutions to potential problems. The author further elaborates on each of the indicators and includes a story from the school's practice, which may become a suitable inspiration for educational institutions.

Conclusion

The text presents an insight into the education of pupils with hearing impairment through the point of view of three key actors – the family, the school and the school counselling centre. These educational stakeholders should ideally always work together in the best interests of the hearing impaired pupil. However, the communication is not always functional, and some parents do not (or cannot) want to be involved in their child's school environment and education. In such cases, teachers have to cooperate even more within their team, and may also involve specialists and staff from the special education centre or the pedagogical-psychological counselling centre.

Functional inclusive education brings with it results in student satisfaction and school success. However, inappropriately chosen inclusive education can lead to the emergence of pathological phenomena (bullying), or to the pupil's status outside the classroom – the personal characteristics of the pupil have a significant influence on this. Unfortunately, in many cases, a hearing impairment also entails a communication and social barrier that is not easy to overcome. The author of the text aims to explore this issue further and, as part of the investigation of her dissertation, to create a material intended for pedagogical staff who come into contact with pupils with hearing impairment as part of the educational process. The material will serve to ensure that they are all suitably prepared and equipped with the knowledge and sufficient competences to work with pupils with hearing impairment. In this way, inclusive education will be most suitable for all.

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