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PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECTS AS EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATED ACTION

Aida Cristina FRANGULEA PASTOR

* Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest, Romania

Abstract: *Integrated education is interpreted in a double meaning. The common sense is revealed by the integration of children with special needs in kindergarten and schools, but the most provocative meaning is creating educational activities which engage information, abilities and competencies in a monodisciplinary, interdisciplinary, pluridisciplinary and transdisciplinary interpretation. Both can represent main point for designing, implementing and evaluating educational activities, either formal, non formal or the informal kind. The formal system of education is rather opaque in managing educational activities as an integrated methodology of implementing the curricula. The more educational philosophy connects with the integrative dimension, the more children (later teenager and grownups) can become more flexible and connected with rapid changes.*

To argue these issues in this article, there are presented two case studies for project/partnership regarding integrated education. One of them refers to kindergarten as early intervention and education in the context of creating sustainable partnership and implementing project in a formal educational system. The second one looks at teenagers involved in projects as non formal educational interventions. Two different age group, two different types of activities, but aiming at the same results: development of competencies, raising tolerance and accepting different point of view determined by different types of life and educational experience.

Keywords: *Integrated education, curricula, integrative dimension, early intervention, development of competencies, educational experience, project, and partnership.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction in 2008 of the educational policy document "New Curriculum for preschool education" determined a change of vision, not only in the field of instructive educational activity conducted by preschool teachers, but also in the area of introducing new ways of conceiving the overall educational activities.

The new curriculum is a new reference document characterized by new goals and

objectives that are consistent with the evolution of information and society in general. This document entailed a reconsideration of all educational activities conducted with children (by introducing the daily schedule, thematic projects, annual themes, morning meeting, etc.) but also by introducing new concepts such as integrated activity, experiential domains (Language and Communication Domain, Science Domain, Aesthetic and Creative Domain, Psychomotor domain, Human and Society Domain), transitions, routines,

experiential areas activities, personal development activities, etc.

Within this document it is underlined the "bi-univocal relationship content-educational methods and there is a special emphasis on the teacher's role in the activation of constructive and creative mental functions of children" [6]. Besides this, the main element of integrated/integrating perspectives is the idea of a teacher who acts as resource person, who informs the pupil and gives them full access to information, diagnoses problems and supports and directs the child without contradicting or labeling him or her, by working individually or in small groups with preschool respecting their own rhythm etc."

The perspective presented in this paper is determined by conducting a long-term partnership between Kindergarten no. 9 Brasov and the Center for Inclusive Education and Recovery of Deaf Children (CSEIRH), both located in the city of Brasov. The collaboration that exists between the two educational institutions is one of the successful models of integration of deaf children at local and regional level. The collaboration dates back to 1993, when two classes of deaf preschool children were established followed by increasing the number of children in the center. Joint initiatives have been focused during the collaboration on: integration of deaf children in each of the groups of preschoolers (total or partial integration that was determined by each case), organizing joint educational activities, managing common events or festivities, trips, organizing and participating in joint pedagogical and methodical commissions.

The following sequences are specified elements of good practice and results of activities undertaken jointly by the two institutions both in the context of partnership and conducting the same project. Also in this paper is presented a proposal of a project for teenagers regarding intercultural education in order to emphasize the formative and informative role of partnerships and projects as learning instruments.

Implementing educational activities through different types of projects can become a desideratum equally important for achieving formal educational aims and objectives. Also it

may be a proper frame to establish long term collaboration between educational institutions and local or regional partners (either public or private, NGO's)

2. PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECTS AS EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATED ACTION

In this paper there are presented two conceptual clarifications. One of them refers to this new "logic of projects" and the second refers to the "integrated/integrational perspective of activities specific to implementing a project.

2.1. The "logic of projects" in the view of the New Curriculum refers to the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities whose outcomes are determined by the aims of the specific educational objectives converged by educational preschool level. These activities are time bound and require a certain amount of resources (information, human, material and / or financial). Given this description, in preschool education there can be implement the following types of projects:

a) Thematic projects

It is determined by the introduction of the New Curriculum. It can have a maximum duration of five weeks, it is in conjunction with one of the six annual issues of curriculum proposed

b) Educational projects

These imply cooperation between minimum two partners (schools, institutions), they can have varying duration assumed by the partners, the needs identified are conjunction those identified by partners or those involved in their management plans

c) Project proposed for financing

It involves creating a solid team whose members belong to two or more institutions, the duration is determined by the maximum amount of funding, the complex of effects outreach institutional area.

Following collaboration between the two institutions, there have been successfully carried out the first two types of projects initiated by teachers from both institutions. Integrating children with special educational needs involves daily activities of partial or



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total integration of deaf children in kindergarten groups (mass education).

2.2. Integrated/ integrational perspective

Integrated perspective of pre-school educational activities is described as "knowledge from several disciplines can be merged smoothly during an entire day and, on this occasion, the integrated activity includes games, activities chosen or interdisciplinary knowledge from experiential domains are focused on specific areas chosen by the teacher or by children". It is important to remember that any phase or sequence of activities (phase I, phase II, phase III, etc.) can be established by teacher.

The integrational aspect concerns, in the spirit of collaboration between Kindergarten No.9 and Inclusive Education Centre for the Recovery of Deaf Children (CSEIRH), integrating children with special educational needs in preschool education.

The long-term objectives are aimed not only at integration and inclusion of children with SEN – special educational need (deafness) in classes of preschool children but also in the real, authentic exchange of experience and knowledge between teachers and managers of both institutions. Given the logic of projects and the integrated/integrational vision, the role of such partnerships in this context should be focused around the following key areas: providing direct beneficiary (the child with SEN) with the best interventions in order to maximize the ameliorative interventions, information and training of teachers (both mainstream and from the specialist) on the integration and intervention for children with SEN, offering information for future specialists trained in higher education institutions (especially pedagogy and psychology fields) on the integration model, how to design educational goals and current tasks for such children.

3. PRESENTATION OF EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE OF PROJECTS/PARTNERSHIPS

3.1. Educational project "Friendship is a ray of hope" (Education for peace, cooperation and participation, Education and Democracy).

Developed by teachers from kindergarten no. 9 Brasov, CSEIRH Brasov and Kindergarten Nr. 1 Teliu, Brasov. The purpose of this partnership aimed at:

Developing and strengthening of positive attitudes towards preschool children, and ethnic and cultural diversity for people with disabilities.

Involvement of both preschool children in mainstream education and special education in the development of joint activities proposed and developed according to age and individual peculiarities and features of the communities in which they come.

Development of an institutional communication platform as a basis for carrying out educational projects and partnerships.

3.2. Introducing the "COME TOGETHER" project.

The project aims to increase ethnic tolerance and acceptance among young people. The project's target group is represented by high school students from high schools in the county of Arges and teachers specializing in history and social science teaching in the operating schools level.

The main activities to be implemented under this project are to train teachers on issues of intercultural and development of intercultural exchanges between young people in the counties of Brasov and Arges.

The overall objective is to increase tolerance and acceptance among young ethnic diverse individuals.

The specific objectives are: development of knowledge related to intercultural diversity and intercultural education for a total of 20 teachers of history and social sciences in secondary schools in the counties of Brasov and Arges, exchanging cultural experiences in ethnic Romanian high school students in the county of Arges and Hungarian high school students in Brasov county, encouraging activities involving inter-ethnic relationship between young people. The expected outcomes of the project are: high school teachers selected and trained in cultural diversity, students - both Hungarian and Romanian ethnics -, informed and involved in the project, organizing intercultural exchanges between Romanian and Hungarian participants, students awarded the creative contest Diversity, editing the COME TOGETHER magazine, institutions and organizations informed through the 500 information and promotional materials, an increased level of understanding and acceptance of ethnic diversity, a high degree of active involvement of young people, setting an example of good practice in inter-ethnic cooperation and communication.

3. CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Project-based activity (the performance of specific partnerships) is generally determined by the specific characteristics different from those familiar with whom people are involved in its operations (teachers, or educational trained specialists at preschool level). For implementing successful projects (educational, thematic or for financing projects) are required a set of elements regarding: establishing clear project objectives and expected results, sizing activities, required resources (human, material, financial, informational), the allotted time period, the deadline for achievement of the

person/persons responsible, establishing the roles within the management team and implementation team, identifying external persons who may be involved in the project, permanent monitoring of project implementation, continuous assessment of the project.

An educational institution has initiated numerous projects in the Brasov county area and is now the task of pre-school institutions to generate ideas and viable projects. Each of these initiatives, including this symposium highlights the information and disseminates models of best practices and successful experiences.

The partnership model presented in this paper is a successful and long lasting. Ongoing work of teachers and managers of the two institutions concerning enrichment activities and resources in gaining experience as relevant to the success of integration of children with SEN.

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