



Tamara B. Milić¹
Ministry of Education of Montenegro

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Actual Praxis and Approaches to Inclusive Education of Autistic Children in Montenegro – Inclusion Focus

Extended summary

Research aim

The aim of the research is determining the state inclusion education of children with autism in Montenegro. Special aims are identifying praxis, identifying approaches and methods of work; suggest service for quality education and education of children with autism.

Significance and Theoretical Context of the Problem

Inclusive education is led by the principles: regular school is the first choice and children are directed into specialised environment when it is the only one and the best interest.

Autism has neurobiological basis. Disorders are in social contact, speech and communication, thinking, behaviour and sensor perception. Visual approaches are dominant, communication with the aid of images, structured teaching, modified behaviour, etc. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is most frequently used in praxis. Applied analysis of ABA, structuring, adjusting, social stories.

Description of methodological approach

Detecting autism usually occurs at the age of three years. Observed children show hypersensitivity to sound, touch, change of area and personal borders. Speech is inadequate or it is missing. They tend to learn through symbolic form, direction, structure. PECS was not applied; work on rules, techniques of behaviour. Parents were directed to diagnosis, managing verbal communication.

¹ t.milic@mps.gov.me

The research included 119 teachers, among which 75.6% never had had any training concerning autism. They perceived that a child learned more successfully in the visual form 55.2%; advanced when she/he had rules and expectations 46.1%; achieved success when she/he had clear frame of work and directions 40%. Methods, which stimulated individuality and ability of a child to take, care about her/him 59.7%, rewarding positive behaviour 51.7%. It is about teaching methodology based on general pedagogical postulates, gained through initial education, and not purposefully oriented towards autism.

Several new variables were formed, so that correlation between variables and the quality of assumption could be made. Primary school teachers (1st cycle) are more informed concerning approach in work, then there are teachers of the second cycle, whereas teachers of the third cycle are completely uninformed. The reason for this is that a great number of trainings were done in the first three years; methods of the active teaching are applied. Expectations from professionals refer to creating IROP, preparation for the classes, teaching materials, trainings, advice, methods demonstration, individual work with children.

We have applied correlation analysis and we have determined that work praxis is directly influenced by the level of knowledge about the characteristics of autism. When the teacher is acquainted with developmental-educational needs of children with autism he/she is capable of applying adequate and aimed methods and approaches in work.

Findings in focus groups show that initial education does not satisfy the needs for work. Degree of knowledge varies among the professionals; speech therapists are much more informed, because they work directly with children. Methods of general special education praxis are applied. Aimed trainings were rarely used. Psychologists and pedagogues do not have a clear or almost no action about features of these children, experience and competencies in work with them. Owing to recent trainings for autism, professional resource institutions improved theoretical level, but application in praxis has not been done.

Pedagogical implications

It is necessary to improve early detection, treatment and psychosocial support of children and parents.

Individual programme should be applied at all levels of education and pedagogical work.

Professional support to inclusive education should rely on the Resource centre for autism, which through trainings, aid in composing IROP, immediate work with children, composing specialised material. Since it is situated in the central part of Montenegro, the idea is that one school with special classes in Southern and Northern part becomes a regional centre.

Position of school should be determined – speech therapist works individually with children, offers consultations and instructions to parents, teachers, and professional service.

Proposed measures refer to basic education and professional development. Basic students should have a compulsory subject Teaching Methodology with Children with Special Educational Needs with the module for autism.

Key words: communication, interaction, visual approaches to learning, structural teaching, social stories.

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