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Students with Special Educational Needs from the Perspective of Four Decades

KEYWORDS ABSTRACT

special educational needs; psychological and pedagogical assistance; integration; adaptation; customized educational process

The aim of the discussion was to show the changes in the perception of students with special educational needs and the organization of their learning process. The empirical research included current difficulties in everyday work with students with special educational needs according to teachers. The research method was a diagnostic survey with a survey technique. The chi-square test was used to analyze the results obtained in terms of the significance of the existing relation. Eighty-three teachers of early school education from public schools took part in the research. The research results have shown current problems in implementing education that meets the requirements of students with special educational needs. The answers obtained indicate that the main problem preventing the correct implementation of individual recommendations is too many students with special educational needs in one group. The analysis of the situation of these students from the perspective of four decades, i.e. since the definition of the concept of special educational needs, as well as the presentation of contemporary problems of school reality, constitute the starting point for a new discussion on introducing changes that will improve the education of students with special educational needs.

Introduction

Forty years ago, Aleksander Hulek pointed to contemporary trends in the development of special educational needs (Hulek 1979: 7-12). The author identified the need to provide educational assistance to children and young people suffering from various disorders that significantly interfere with the requirements of an ordinary school¹ as the first postulated change. Another postulate concerned the features of special education (e.g. a customized educational process, slower pace of work with a student, or requirements tailored to the student's skills), as the features of general education and upbringing. Hulek thus suggested enabling the students, who were previously sent to special schools, to be educated in ordinary schools. Important suggestions also included providing pedagogical assistance to an increasing number of people suffering from various diseases and syndromes. In addition, at that time it was argued that the work of a teacher should be better supported by specialists such as: speech therapists, psychotherapists, doctors and social assistants. Finally, an important feature of the development of the contemporary special education was the system of inclusive education and upbringing, consisting in the maximum inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs into ordinary schools and other educational institutions, which enabled them to grow up among peers without disorders. The inclusive education model was then indicated as a higher stage in the evolution of the relation between healthy and disabled people, aimed at providing better services to the benefit of the latter.

The approximate trends for the development of education described in 1979 are an example of the continuous evolution of pedagogy, which is always accompanied by one goal: aiming to create the most effective system of education and upbringing of children and young people.

Many young pedagogues may think that considerations on the organization of the educational process for students with special educational needs is the domain of modern pedagogy, but it should be remembered that the process of creating an educational structure taking into account the individual educational needs of each student began well before systematizing the concept of "a student with special educational needs." In addition, the trends of special pedagogy development indicated by Aleksander Hulk make contemporary pedagogues reflect on the difficult and long-term process of implementing new ideas in educational practice. It may seem that introducing changes that obviously improve the quality of students' education should be implemented as quickly as possible. In addition, taking into account the passage of forty years since then, and the fact that we have witnessed enormous political, social and

¹ In 1970s the term "normal school" or "ordinary school" was regarded as the correct expression.

economic changes of a global nature during this period, it can be concluded that the postulated changes have already been fully implemented in the contemporary school. However, does the current education system actually meet the needs of students?

These considerations will be devoted to the analysis of the last forty years through the prism of implementing a system of education tailored to the student with special educational needs, and they will show the opinions of teachers from grades I-III on the current school reality in the context of adapting early school education to the individual needs of the student.

The origin of the concept of "special educational needs"

The term 'special educational needs' was first formulated in the report *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*, prepared by a team of researchers led by Mary Warnock, upon the request of the UK Parliament in 1978 (Warnock 1978: 37-38). The report included this term as a new expression defining the innovative concept of handicap perception, which is not limited to the adopted, exclusively medical, divisions/types of these disabilities, but also includes all factors affecting the child's educational progress. The concept suggested by Mary Warnock referred to the needs of handicapped children and young people, including social disabilities. The new view was to shape the education system taking into account the multi-directional needs of handicapped students.

The development and popularization of the discussed term took place in 1994 during the UNESCO World Conference in Salamanca. In the introduction of the declaration formulated at the time, we can read that

on June 7-10, 1994, over 300 participants from 92 governments and 25 international organizations met to express their support for the goal of *Education for All* by considering fundamental political changes necessary to promote the access to education for all, namely to enable schools to serve all children, in particular those with special educational needs" (see http://rownosc.info/media/uploads/deklaracja_z_salamanki.pdf [access: 21.11.2019]).

Unlike the original meaning of the term 'special educational needs' (related to handicapped children), in the adopted declaration, the term covers all children and young people whose needs result from disabilities or learning difficulties. In addition, conference participants drew attention to the individual characteristics of students, their interests, skills, and educational needs. The consequence of this individual perception of each student should be the creation and implementation of educational

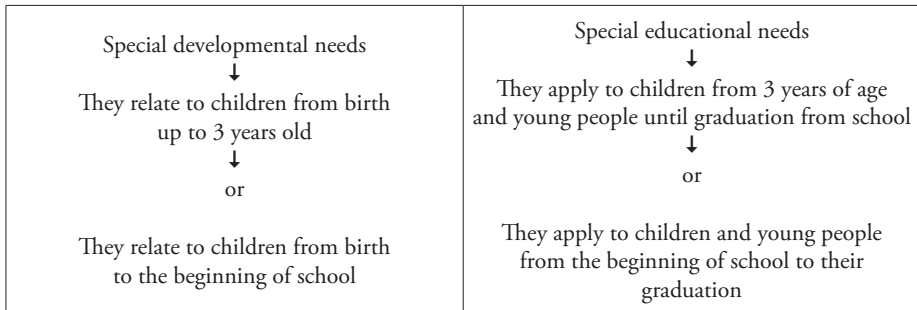
programs that take into account different personality traits and needs of children and young people. According to the formulated guidelines, schools should accept all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other problems (see http://rownosc.info/media/uploads/deklaracja_z_salamanki.pdf [access: 21.11.2019]). Undoubtedly, the guidelines resulting from the conference in Salamanca developed the meaning of the term 'special educational needs' and contributed to the popularization of innovative assumptions in the process of organizing education systems.

In Polish books, the term was described by, among others, Marta Bogdanowicz. In the author's view, the term 'special educational needs' refers to the group of students who are unable to meet the requirements of the valid educational program. They have more learning difficulties than their peers. They are able to continue their education, but they need pedagogical assistance in the form of a special curriculum and education, special methods tailored to their needs, possibilities and limitations. They should be taught by specialists in appropriate basic conditions, taking into account various organizational solutions (Bogdanowicz 1995: 216).

The reflection of the formulated postulates was a series of actions taken in Poland at the governmental level, the aim of which was to tailor the education system to the needs and expectations of the society.² Such activities include the work of the Team for Special Educational Needs and Counseling established in 2008 by the Minister of National Education. The team's suggestions contained in the 2009 report clarified the concept of 'special development and educational needs'. According to the first suggestion, "children and young people with special developmental and educational needs are those with a spectrum of symptoms that impede or prevent functioning. They include movement, sensory, cognitive, communication, emotional-social and/or mental symptoms, affecting the quality of life and social roles now and/or in the future." In the second approach, "children and young people with special developmental and educational needs are those at risk of disability, with dysfunctions, disharmony or disorders that may have a negative impact on their further development" (see: http://radaporadnictwa.webd.pl/pliki/Raport_I_Male_dziecko_30_marca_2009.doc [access: 20.11.2019]). In addition, unlike in the previous research, a distinction was made between developmental and educational needs. The differences are presented in scheme 1.

² The concept of "special educational needs" can be found, among others, in the 1998 brochure, the so-called orange booklet devoted to Reforming the Education of Students with Special Educational Needs. The publication prepared by the Team for the Reform of the Education System for Students with Special Educational Needs in the Ministry of National Education and Sport defined 'special educational needs' as those which, in the course of the development of children and young people, result from their handicaps or arise from other causes and difficulties in learning.

Scheme no. 1. Differences between special developmental needs and special educational needs



Source: the author's own work.

Another legal act that significantly changed the organization of the education system for children and young people with special educational needs was the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 April 2013 on the provision of psychological and pedagogical support in public preschools, schools and educational institutions (Journal of Laws 2013, item 532). According to the document, psychological and pedagogical assistance provided to a student in kindergarten, school or another institution is based on recognizing and satisfying his/her individual developmental and educational needs, as well as recognizing his/her psychophysical potential. The regulation specifies 11 factors justifying the need for appropriate assistance. They include:

1. disability;
2. social maladjustment;
3. threat of social maladjustment;
4. special talents;
5. specific learning difficulties;
6. language communication disorders;
7. chronic diseases;
8. crisis or traumatic situations;
9. educational failures;
10. background negligence related to the life situation of the student and his family, the way of spending free time, and contacts with other peers;
11. adaptation difficulties related to cultural differences or to the change of the educational environment, including previous education abroad (see <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20130000532> [access: November 20, 2019]).

The Regulation of 2013 specified the actions taken by teachers that were aimed at supporting the comprehensive development of a child, taking into account his/her individual educational needs. Although the wording of this regulation has been modified several times so far, the key assumptions contained therein have remained unchanged and they largely regulate the organization of the education process, including the work of teachers, educators, pedagogues and specialists.³

The teacher and his/her work with a student with special educational needs

It is unsurprising that schools have altered along with socio-political changes, because education is a kind of reflection of social needs and expectations.

The teacher who is the main creator of the relationship with the student and his/her parent plays a key role in the education process. Therefore, it is natural that, together with formulating postulates regarding work with a student with special educational needs, tasks related to the teacher will be defined.

In addition to formulating the concept of 'special educational needs', the *Special Educational Needs* report describes new tasks for teachers who implement the proposed solutions. This report, prepared under the authority of Mary Warnock, highlighted the need to hire support staff to assist teachers (Warnock 1978: 135). As regards teachers, new requirements were stressed. They were associated with the need to correctly diagnose a child starting education, which required appropriate training (Warnock 1978: 227).

At the time when the concept of 'special educational needs' was established in the Western Europe, in Poland pedagogues were thinking about the subject of special and normal/ ordinary education, including the organization of pedagogues' work. Szczepan Larecki pointed to the need to improve the qualifications of all teachers in the field of special pedagogy and clinical psychology. Expanding the teachers' knowledge was to serve a variety of tasks: it was to contribute to creating a climate of understanding of a child who has difficulties in meeting the school requirements; to make the teacher ready to support the child in a school or family environment; to help in submitting applications for the examination by specialists in terms of the type of difficulties and their causes or a type, quality and degree of the child's disorders. The purpose of obtaining a specialized diagnosis was to determine the directions and forms

³ The changes were implemented in the regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 (Journal of Laws 2017, item 1591), and then in the regulation of the Minister of National Education of 16 August 2018 (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1647), and in the regulation of the Minister of National Education of 13 February 2019 (Journal of Laws 2019, item 323).

of further care and assistance for a given child. At the same time, the author points to the problem of the lack of specialist staff to conduct corrective actions (Larecki 1979: 71-73).

Although discussions carried out at that time on special education did not yet cover the concept of Mary Warnock, they also addressed the issue of providing appropriate assistance to students with various developmental and educational difficulties. As we can read in Janusz Kostrzewski's book:

children neglected pedagogically; children with a slow course of orientation-cognitive, intellectual and executive processes; children with intellectual abilities lower than the average; and children with insignificant partial deficits should attend normal schools. They will require intensive stimulation as early as possible, then corrective and compensatory assistance, as well as a customized educational process tailored to the profile of their skills (Kostrzewski 1979: 92).

Kostrzewski's assumptions confirm the awareness and desire to individualize the education process depending on the needs of particular students.

In 2013, when the rules for providing psychological and pedagogical assistance were strictly regulated and established, the idea of education taking into account the special educational needs of children and young people developed, and the responsibilities of pedagogues in this respect were established in detail. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education, the tasks of teachers of early school education include:

- recognizing individual developmental and educational needs as well as individual psychophysical possibilities of students, including their interests and talents;
- conducting pedagogical observation in kindergarten culminating in the analysis and assessment of the child's readiness to start school;
- conducting observations at school, during ongoing work with students, aimed at recognizing their learning difficulties (recognizing the risk of specific learning difficulties) or special talents;
- if the class teacher states that it is necessary to provide the student with psychological and pedagogical assistance, the student should be given immediate support during the ongoing work;
- if the class teacher (supported by the head teacher and other specialists) concludes that it is necessary to provide the student with psychological and pedagogical assistance - planning and coordinating the psychological and pedagogical assistance provided to the student, including the form of providing this assistance, the period of its duration, and the number of hours during which individual forms will be implemented;

- cooperation with the student's parents and depending on the needs - with other teachers, teachers of educational groups and specialists conducting activities with the student, and with counseling centers or other people;
- preparing documentation in accordance with the regulations (see <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20130000532> [access: 20.11.2019]).

Apart from the instructions regarding the direct work of the teacher with the student, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 2013 (Journal of Laws 2013, item 532 §21, para. 1, 2 and §19, para. 5, 7) ordained making detailed documentation of actions taken (based on art. 22, para. 2, point 5 of the act) from the moment of planning to the final evaluation and starting cooperation with other specialists and parents, the course of which also had to be documented.⁴ The currently binding legal regulations still indicate the need to keep the documentation of psychological and pedagogical assistance, however in a slightly different form.

The entry into force of the regulation on the provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance was (and still is) associated with the supervision of the course of correction the students' dysfunctions and the collection of quantitative data on the number of students who received support due to their special educational needs. Thanks to this, it is possible to recognize the number of students who require individual assistance.

Table 1 presents the number of students with special educational needs in 2011-2018 in kindergartens and primary schools in Poland. The data presented by the IT Education Center does not include students with educational failures.

Table 1. The number of students with special educational needs in 2011-2018

	School year 2011/2012	School year 2012/2013	School year 2013/2014	School year 2014/2015	School year 2015/2016	School year 2016/2017	School year 2017/2018
Kindergarten pupils with special educational needs	9450	10 801	16 429	18 858	21 329	25 519	28 825

⁴ The issues concerning the documentation of psychological and pedagogical support are described in detail in the regulation of the Minister of National Education of 25 August 2017 concerning the way of documenting the course of educational and upbringing activity by public preschools, schools and other educational institutions, and the kinds of documentation that are required (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1646 as amended).

	School year 2011/2012	School year 2012/2013	School year 2013/2014	School year 2014/2015	School year 2015/2016	School year 2016/2017	School year 2017/2018
Total number of kindergarten pupils	1 160 503	1 216 467	1 297 189	1 236 280	1 140 605	1 299 138	1 361 183
Percentage of kindergarten pupils with special educational needs	0,81%	0,88%	1,26%	1,52%	1,86%	1,96%	2,11%
Pupils with special educational needs in primary schools	35 237	35 738	60 117	63 167	68 854	73 548	93 704
Total number of pupils in primary schools	2 187 068	2 151 950	2 152 578	2 306 077	2 480 777	2 296 260	2 648 522
Percentage of pupils with special educational needs in primary schools	1,61%	1,66%	2,79%	2,73%	2,77%	3,20%	3,53%

Source: the author's own study based on the data included in the Ministry of Education Information System, <https://cie.men.gov.pl> (access: 20.09.2019).

The data collected in the table above clearly shows that the number of children who require a customized education process is constantly increasing. The statistical data from 1990–2009 contained in Table 2, which includes figures regarding the number of students with special educational needs in various types of primary school classes, is presented in a different light.

Table 2. The number of students with special educational needs in the years 1990-2009

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE					
School year	special primary school	special classes in primary school	inclusive classroom in primary school	ordinary classroom in primary school	pupils in all types of schools
1990/1991	84 317	17 363	x	X	101 680
1995/1996	82 999	6613	2036	4158	95 806
1996/1997	80 556	7222	2491	5802	96 071
1997/1998	80 353	7352	3590	9681	100 976
1998/1999	77 161	7529	4216	11 925	100 831
1999/2000	59 397	4654	5033	12 608	81 692
2000/2001	52 020	3207	6897	37 890	100 014
2001/2002	42 424	2156	8305	43 318	96 203
2002/2003	39 873	1753	9120	32 842	83 588
2003/2004	37 733	1733	10 933	30 330	80 729
2004/2005	35 052	1653	12 641	30 166	79 512
2005/2006	33 209	1450	13 578	28 315	76 552
2006/2007	31 220	1290	14 278	26 240	73 028
2007/2008	27 284	2304	11 084	27 392	68 064
2008/2009	25 883	1616	11 362	24 796	63 657

Source: the author's own study based on the data from the Central Statistical Office, https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/E_oswiata_i_wychowanie_2012-2013.pdf (access: 20.09.2019).

The statistical data contained in Table 2 shows a decrease in the number of students in special schools and special classes of primary schools, and an increase in the number of students in inclusive classes and ordinary classes of primary schools. The differences in numbers are somehow a reflection of the changes taking place in the organization of the education system that took place at that time. On the one hand, one can notice a decrease in the number of students attending special education institutions, while on the other hand, an increase in the number of students attending inclusive and ordinary classes is noticeable. Both of these trends illustrate the changes in the perception

of education of children with special educational needs, consisting in their inclusion in the peer environment of ordinary schools. However, despite the variable numbers in individual types of schools or school classes, the overall number of students with special educational needs decreased in the years 1990-2009. It should be emphasized that the data contained in Table 2 refers to students with special educational needs, but without taking into account all categories of special educational needs contained in the regulation on the principles of providing psychological and pedagogical assistance of 2013. For this reason, in Table 3, the number of students participating in didactic-remedial, corrective-compensatory, speech therapy and socio-therapeutic classes is given, who, according to current legal regulations, also belong to the group of students with special educational needs.

Table 3. The number of students receiving other forms of assistance due to psychological and pedagogical classes in primary schools (excluding special schools) in the years 1990-2009

school year	STUDENTS RECEIVING OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE DURING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH (excluding special schools)				
	didactic-remedial	corrective-compensatory	speech therapy	socio-therapeutic	total number of pupils
1990/1991	855 148	255 411	–	–	1 110 559
1995/1996	604 048	511 413	–	–	1 115 461
1996/1997	614 995	515 454	–	–	1 130 449
1997/1998	614 714	532 350	–	–	1 147 064
1998/1999	607 642	551 458	–	–	1 159 100
1999/2000	512 810	471 138	–	–	983 948
2000/2001	470 824	386 362	–	–	857 186
2001/2002	457 375	301 082	–	–	758 457
2002/2003	454 681	285 439	–	–	740 120
2003/2004	468 659	209 269	93 439	–	771 367
2004/2005	489 271	191 872	104 722	–	785 865
2005/2006	503 310	184 131	105 995	26 215	819 651
2006/2007	506 792	175 861	113 618	25 363	821 634

	STUDENTS RECEIVING OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE DURING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH (excluding special schools)				
school year	didactic-remedial	corrective-compensatory	speech therapy	socio-therapeutic	total number of pupils
2007/2008	502 651	214 203	115 849	20 331	853 034
2008/2009	479 694	193 688	115 270	17 899	806 551

Source: the author's own study based on the data from the Central Statistical Office, https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/E_oswiata_i_wychowanie_2012-2013.pdf [access: September 20, 2019].

As in the case of students with special educational needs, the number of students receiving other forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance also decreased. What is the reason for the decrease in the number of students who required the individualized educational process in 1990-2009, and for the increase in their number in 2011-2018? Perhaps, in the first case, it is the result of broadly understood changes that took place in our country in the years 1990-2009, including openness to new methods and forms of work with the student and general changes in the organization of the education system, which contributed to increasing the efficiency of the education process. It is much more difficult to explain the reasons for the increase in the number of students with special educational needs in the years 2011-2018, when modern methods and forms of teaching (even related to the use of information technology) were and still are an everyday element of school work and, as in previous years, should contribute to increasing efficiency of the education process. It can be assumed that in the current education system there are other types of problems disturbing the efficiency of didactic- educational interactions. Undoubtedly, the education process is complex and depends on many factors, and the teacher plays the role of a creator of the didactic process. Therefore, the next part of this article presents some information about the current state of education of the student with special educational needs from the perspective of the teacher's experience.

Methodological assumptions of the author's own research

Education is the process of learning about the surrounding reality and acquiring knowledge accumulated as a result of the research process (Maszke 2008: 14). Its purpose is to create scientific knowledge using specific research methods. This scientific

cognition is based on theoretical and empirical research, which complement each other and thus become the key to the development of science (Bhattacharjee 2012: 3-4). Aiming at the development of pedagogy as a science, it is necessary to gather and verify knowledge about educational phenomena. Thus, the subject of the research was the school situation of a student with special educational needs. The aim of the research was to find out teachers' opinions about working with students with special educational needs in early school education.

The main problem was formulated as the following question: *What is the school situation of a student with special educational needs in the opinion of early school teachers?*

Detailed research issues concerned the following questions:

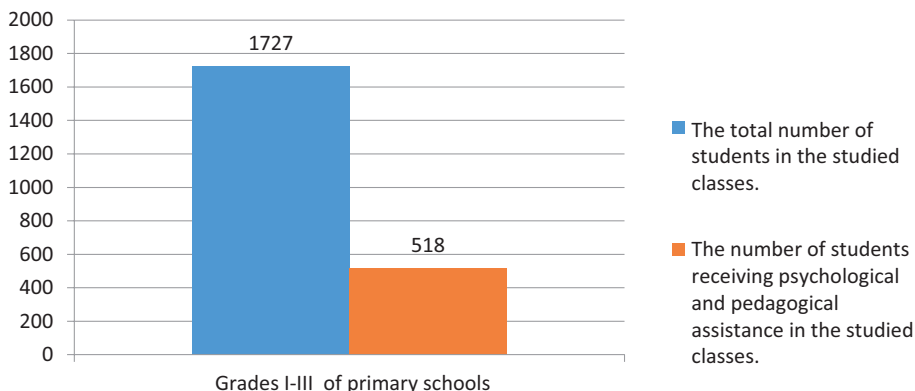
- What is the number of all students and students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance in the studied classes?
- What are the teachers' opinions on the current systemic solutions regulating educational conditions for students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance?
- What are the teachers' opinions about the support given to them by psychological and pedagogical counseling centers or other institutions?
- What are the teachers' opinions on the quality of recommendations implemented by them regarding work with a child with special educational needs?
- Does the number of students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance determine the quality of the implemented recommendations regarding work with a child with special educational needs?
- Do teachers notice the increase in the number of students with special educational needs from the perspective of their own experience?

In order to collect the research material, the diagnostic survey method was used, with the technique of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of several closed questions with a cafeteria of a disjunctive nature. By analyzing the collected empirical material in terms of the occurring relationships, the chi square test was used, which allowed for testing statistical significance. The research was conducted in September 2019 and included a group of 83 early school education teachers, running 83 grades I-III in 14 state schools of the Silesian Region. The collected research material showing the teachers' opinion on working with a student with special educational needs introduces a fragment of school reality seeking to individualize the education process.

Teacher of a student with special educational needs - the results of the author's own research

In the first questions, the teachers were asked to indicate the total number of students in the class and the number of students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance. The results of the research are presented in chart 1.

Chart 1. The total number of students in the studied groups and the number of students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance



Source: the author's own study.

In total, 1,727 students attend the studied classes, 518 of which receive psychological and pedagogical assistance. The number of children receiving pedagogical assistance is 29.9% of all the students. The teachers' detailed answers indicate that most often there are 5 to 8 students in one class who receive psychological and pedagogical assistance, although as many as 15 were in one of the studied groups. In turn, among the studied groups, only 26 classes had less than 20 students, and there were no classes in which the number of students was less than 15. When comparing the percentage of students with special educational needs in the conducted research (29.9%), and those included in Table 1 (in 2017-2018 it is 3.53%), one can notice a significant difference.

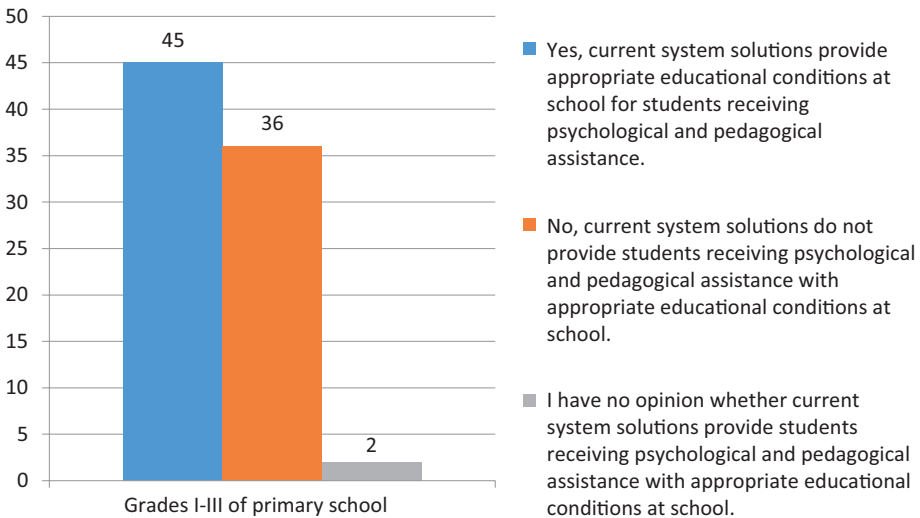
The explanation of this status may be, first of all, the fact that the statistical data from the Educational Information System, on which Table 1 is based, generally refers to primary school, without division into junior and senior classes, and the research presented in Figure 1 referred only to younger classes. However, the second (one could say decisive) reason for such large differences is not to include students with school failures in their reports. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National

Education of 2013, these students are indicated as a group to be given psychological and pedagogical assistance in accordance with all the guidelines contained in the indicated legal act. Thus, they belong to a group of students with special educational needs.

Apart from comparing the number of students in individual years, it is important that the number of students requiring the customized education process accounts for almost a third of all younger students.

Another question addressed to the respondents concerned their opinion on whether the current system solutions provide proper educational conditions in the school area for students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance. The answers of the respondents are presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Teachers' opinions on the current system solutions regarding work with students with special educational needs



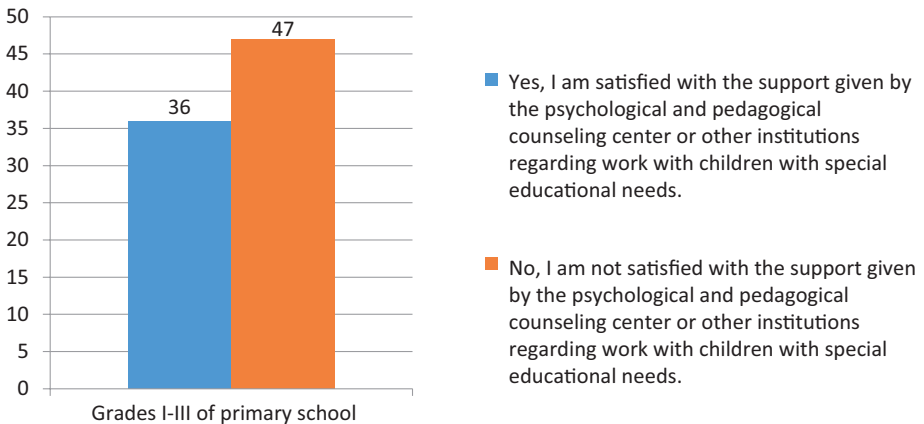
Source: the author's own study.

The teachers' answers indicate that the majority of them (54.2%) believe that the current system solutions ensure proper educational conditions at school for students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance. A different opinion on this subject was expressed by 43.3% of the teachers surveyed, for whom current solutions are insufficient. Only 2.4% of the respondents did not have an opinion on this subject,

however they were teachers starting work at school, hence it can be concluded that their knowledge on this subject is limited.

Even greater differences of opinions between the teachers arouse regarding their satisfaction with the support given to them by psychological and pedagogical counseling centers or other institutions. The teachers' answers are presented in Chart 3.

Chart 3. Teachers' opinions on the support given to them by psychological and pedagogical counseling centers or other institutions

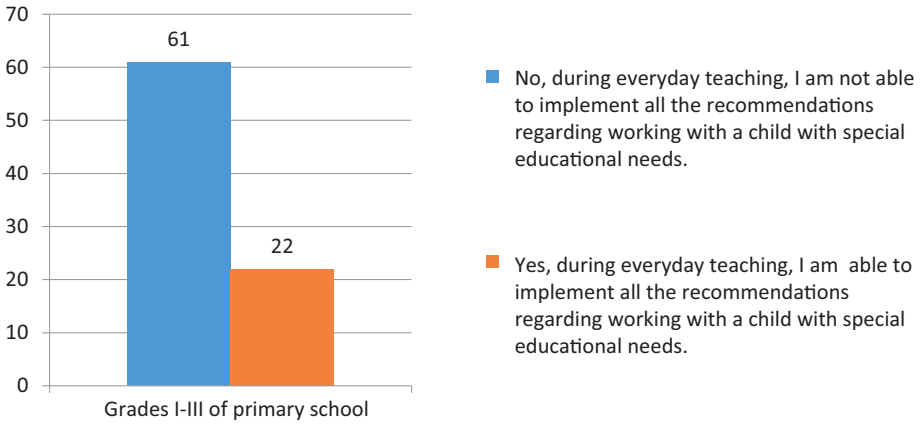


Source: the author's own study.

In the responses regarding the quality of support given by psychological and pedagogical counseling centers or other institutions, the majority of teachers (56.6%) expressed their dissatisfaction in this matter, while 43.4% stated that the given support was sufficient. Therefore, analyzing the current state of education of students with special educational needs based on the obtained research results, one can see the existence of problems in the implementation of cooperation between schools and psychological and pedagogical counseling centers.

Even more unequivocal answers from the surveyed teachers were recorded when asked if they were able to implement all the recommendations regarding working with a child with special educational needs while conducting daily didactic activities. The answers of the respondents are presented in Chart 4.

Chart 4. Teachers' opinions on their implementation of the recommendations for working with a child with special educational needs



Source: the author's own study.

In the case of this question, the vast majority of teachers (73.4%) stated that during their daily activities they are not able to meet all the recommendations regarding working with a child with special educational needs. However, in the opinion of the remaining respondents (27.7%), the implementation of the recommendations during the lessons is not a problem. By conducting a detailed analysis of the answers given, the relationship between the number of students with special educational needs in a given group and the teachers' opinion on the quality of their work was checked. For this purpose, the dependent variable was divided according to the number of students in a given class: up to 5 students, 6-8 students and over 8 students. The verification of the occurrence of the relationships was carried out using the chi-square test. The significance level $p = 0.05$ was adopted. This means that the results of $p < 0.05$ indicate significant relationships between the variables studied. The results of the χ^2 test are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The result of the chi -square test for an independent variable - the number of students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance and the dependent variable.

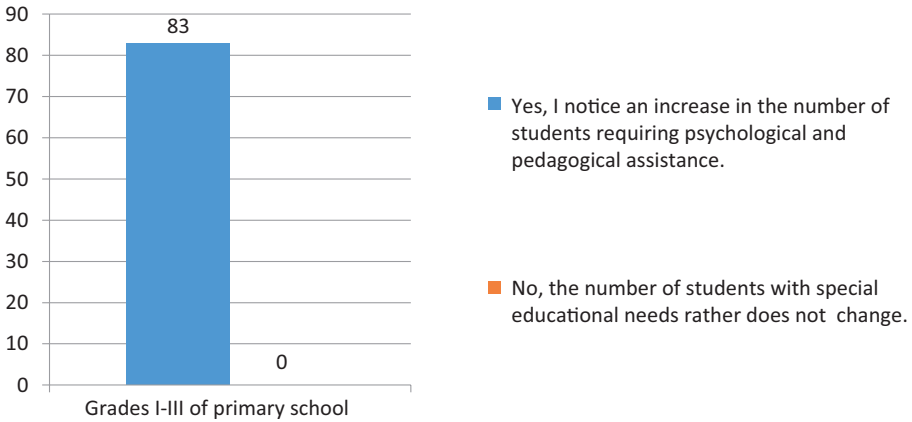
Are you able to implement all the recommendations regarding the work with a child with special educational needs?		The number of students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance			test results
		up to 5 students	6-8 students	more than 8 students	
No, I am not able to implement all the recommendations.	N	17	29	15	$X^2 = 22,986$ df = 2 p = 0,001
	%	42,2%	90,6%	100%	
Yes, I am able to implement all the recommendations	N	19	3	0	
	%	52,8%	9,4%	100%	
Total	N	36	32	15	
	%	100%	100%	100%	

X^2 – test statistics; df – degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance

The obtained result indicates a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between the number of students receiving assistance in a given class and the declaration of the possibility of implementing the recommendations. In other words, the more students need assistance, the more often teachers indicate that they are unable to meet the recommendations. It is worth noting that in a situation where there were more than 8 students in the assisted class, no teacher declared the possibility of implementing the recommendations. The collected empirical material indicates limited possibilities of implementing the recommendations, depending on the number of students who should be provided with special educational conditions.

The question to which the 100% unequivocal answer was obtained was determining by the surveyed teachers whether, on the basis of their own professional experience, they notice an increase in the number of students requiring psychological assistance. The results of the research are presented in Chart 5.

Chart 5. Teachers' opinions on possible changes in the number of students with special educational needs



Source: the author's own study.

All the respondents, even those with short work experience, chose “yes.” It should be added that the vast majority of the surveyed teachers (92.64%) are those with the work experience of over 8 years. The research showed that the increase in the number of students with special educational needs is visible not only in statistical reports, but it is also noticeable by all teachers, regardless of their professional experience.

Conclusions

A general analysis of the research material points to a number of problems faced by teachers during their daily activities. The first of them, in the opinion of 54.2% of teachers of early school education, are inappropriate system solutions that provide inappropriate educational conditions for students receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance. Another drawback, in the opinion of 56.6% of teachers, is the improper support given to them by psychological and pedagogical counseling centers. Finally, the key problem is the fact that, in the opinion of as many as 73.45% of the surveyed teachers, they are not able to meet all the recommendations related to working with students with special educational needs. Such indications are the most disturbing, because they show negative assessments of teachers' work issued not by other people, but by teachers themselves. Although admitting one's own faults or failures is certainly not easy, one can observe, in the conducted research, that teachers have explicitly admitted such deficiencies.

The current legal acts do not have any regulations that would indicate the maximum number of students with special educational needs in one class or allow the employment of a second teacher in a group in which there are many of such students. For this reason, during daily didactic and educational activities, one teacher often has to take into account the individual needs of even a dozen or so students, which, as you can see, is extremely difficult to implement.

When designing the further development of the education system, it is necessary to take into account the increase in the number of students requiring psychological and pedagogical assistance, i.e. students with special educational needs, and to consider new legal regulations regarding the organization of work. The research shows that a large number of students who are unable to meet the school's requirements prevents teachers from the proper adjustment of educational conditions to their special development needs.

Four decades ago, the idea of education and school appeared that wants to connect all students. Since then, a number of changes have been implemented, enabling education without barriers and divisions, but the existing teaching and education processes should still be monitored and verified.

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