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## The disabled in conversations between Kazakh parents and their children<sup>1</sup>

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This paper explores the issue of social transmission regarding the issue of disability as done by Kazakh parents. It covers, in particular, parents' knowledge about disability and the content of conversations they have with their children. The diagnostic survey method based on author's questionnaire with open-ended questions was used. The study included 102 parents: 52 parents of children going to a mainstream school and 50 parents of children attending an inclusive school in, respectively, Astana and Almaty.

The analysis has revealed that the parents of inclusive school children are more knowledgeable about disabilities than parents of mainstream school children at  $p < 0.01$ . The knowledge of parents of the inclusive group is largely derived from their children's educational environment and the media, and the parents of the mainstream group acquires their knowledge mostly from the media and by personal experience.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper presents a part of the research carried out by Laura A. Butabayeva in Kazakhstan under the direction of Ewa M. Kulesza and presented in an unpublished dissertation entitled: *Social attractiveness of disabled peers as stated by first-grade students of Kazakh primary schools (Atrakcyjność społeczna rówieśnika z niepełnosprawnością w wypowiedziach uczniów klas pierwszych kazachskich szkół)*, Archive of the Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University, Warsaw 2016.

The content of the written statements has shown that, compared to the general population, the parental message in the inclusive group more strongly emphasizes tolerance and non-discrimination towards disabled peers. A new concept has also been revealed in the mainstream group that demonstrates negative stereotypical perception of the disabled as people who are abnormal, a concept against which those parents build an image of their own children as healthy and complete. This study confirms the impact of social context on knowledge, attitudes and the image of the disabled and its results are consistent with those of other authors.

**KEY WORDS:** people with disabilities, inclusive school, mainstream school, children, parents

## Introduction

The social image of and attitudes towards disabled people are subject to many factors. The most important factors defined by researchers are the type and degree of disability or illness, especially its external symptoms such as bodily features and behaviour, and the characteristics of the social environment, including culture, traditions, beliefs, stereotypes and prevalent ideas<sup>2</sup>.

As early as 1960s, it was experimentally demonstrated that the positive attitude towards another person depends greatly on the so-called social ecological factors: the distance and frequency of people's meetings: the smaller the distance between people and the more frequently one sees a given face, the more socially attractive

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<sup>2</sup> M. Chodkowska et al. (ed.), *Stereotypy niepełnosprawności. Między wykluczeniem a integracją*, UMCS, Lublin 2010; I. Chrzanowska, *Pedagogika Specjalna. Od tradycji do współczesności*, Impuls, Kraków 2015; E. Czykwin, *Stygmat społeczny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2007; G. Durka, *Stereotypes and prejudices against the disabled (Stereotypy i uprzedzenia wobec osób niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] T. Żółkowska, L. Konopska (ed.), *W kręgu niepełnosprawności – teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty poszukiwań w pedagogice specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo USz., Szczecin 2009; S. Olszewski, K. Parys, M. Trojańska, *Przestrzenie życia osób z niepełnosprawnością*, WN UP, Kraków 2012.

the person seems to them<sup>3</sup>. Hence, one's personal experience of interacting with another person is hugely important. This kind of personal contact is part of the idea of integration, which, present in the Polish social realm since the early 1990s, has had a strong impact on attitudes towards people with disabilities. The idea has radically changed Polish state's social and educational policies and made the disabled cross the boundaries of 'their enclaves' and grow increasingly visible in the shared public space. Some of the insights from a review of Polish studies are as follows:

- Poland has observed an increase in the rate of contacts between adult Poles and people with disabilities: 24% in the 1970s, 40% in the late 1990s and ca. 60% in 2013<sup>4</sup>;
- More and more Poles claim that people with disabilities should learn, work and enjoy all rights to pursue life satisfaction as non-disabled people do<sup>5</sup>;
- The media reproduce stereotypical views of people with disabilities, showing them as either admirable heroes or the helpless who deserve compassion and need help from others. The latter prevails in the media<sup>6</sup>;
- Teachers show diverse attitudes towards people with disabilities: ranging from compassion, mercy and helplessness (the majority of them) to attitudes that stress help, acceptance and respect (less than half of them)<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>3</sup> R. Zaions, *Attitudinal effects of mere exposure*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology," Vol. 9, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ostrowska et al., *The disabled in the society 1993-2013 (Niepełnosprawni w społeczeństwie 1993-2013)*, Wydawnictwo IFiSPAN, Warsaw 2015.

<sup>5</sup> M. Chodkowska et al. (ed.), *Stereotypy niepełnosprawności. Między wykluczeniem a integracją*, UMCS, Lublin 2010; E. Czykwin, *Stygmat społeczny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2007; G. Durka, *Stereotypes and prejudices towards people with disabilities (Stereotypy i uprzedzenia wobec osób niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] T. Żółkowska, L. Konopska (ed.), *W kręgu niepełnosprawności – teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty poszukiwań w pedagogice specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo USz., Szczecin 2009.

<sup>6</sup> I. Banach, *Od integracji do inkluzji*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Zielona Góra 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Cz. Kosakowski, *Węzłowe problemy pedagogiki specjalnej*, Wydawnictwo Akapit, Toruń 2003.

- The vast majority of special education teachers recognize disabled people's right to pursue happiness<sup>8</sup>;
- Mainstream-school teachers can be divided into those who are experienced, enthusiastic and supportive of the idea of integration, and those who are disoriented, indifferent and anxious about integration<sup>9</sup>;
- Poles have the least favourable attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities (e.g. intellectual and motor disabilities) and those with a deformation of face, torso, or lower or upper limbs that is clearly noticeable in the first contact<sup>10</sup>;
- The majority of early-school children view a disabled person as one with visible motor dysfunctions, likely using a wheelchair, crutches or a cane<sup>11</sup>;
- Bodily characteristics are the major factor contributing to early school children's negative view of people with disabilities<sup>12</sup>;

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<sup>8</sup> M. Skura, *Attitudes of special-school teachers towards people with disabilities (Postawy nauczycieli szkoły specjalnej wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością)*, "Szkoła Specjalna" 1, 43-44, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> K.A. Tersa, *The role of the Other in the growth of schools and teachers. On the potential of tolerance towards people with disabilities (Rola Innego w rozwoju szkoły i nauczyciela. O potencjale tolerancji wobec niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] M. Patalon (ed.), *Tolerancja a edukacja*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2008.

<sup>10</sup> A. Sękowski, *The relationship between integration trends and attitudes towards disabled people (Tendencje integracyjne a postawy wobec osób niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] Z. Palak (ed.), *Pedagogika specjalna w reformowanym ustroju edukacyjnym. Materiały z Ogólnopolskiej Konferencji Naukowej, Kazimierz Dolny, 25-26 May 2000*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2001; B. Jachimczak, *Attitudes towards disability: a chance for social acceptance (Postawy wobec niepełnosprawności – szansa na społeczną akceptację)*, [in:] T. Żółkowska (ed.), *Pedagogika specjalna – koncepcje i rzeczywistość*, Print Group, Szczecin 2007.

<sup>11</sup> E.M. Kulesza, *The concept of a disabled person as defined by 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade primary school children (Definiowanie pojęcia osoba niepełnosprawna przez uczniów klas pierwszej i trzeciej szkoły ogólnodostępnej)*, [in:] E. Skrzetuska, M. Jurewicz (ed.), *Edukacja w warunkach zmiany społecznej i kulturowej* Wydawnictwo SGGW, Warsaw 2016, pp. 113-127.

- 10-year-old children are more likely than 6-year-olds to interact with a disabled person<sup>13</sup>;
- Classes deliberately delivered to integrated groups are beneficial, especially in terms of acquisition of knowledge about disability and development of new social skills<sup>14</sup>;
- The parents of children attending integrated schools are more knowledgeable about disabilities and show attitudes that are more positive towards people with disabilities than the parents of mainstream school students<sup>15</sup>.

Arguably, attitudes towards disabled people depend largely on the social environment. If there are disabled people within one's community, then the exposure to those becomes commonplace, and social skills are developed through co-existence; in that case, attitudes towards those people are mostly positive.

It is thus interesting to see what kind of information about people with disabilities is transmitted to children by Kazakh parents whose children attend two different types of schools: an inclusive school and a mainstream one. It is an issue of great importance as disabled students have been present in Kazakhstan's public school space only for the past few years. This space had been previously reserved to students without disabilities. Inclusive education

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<sup>12</sup> A. Soroka-Fedorczuk, *Osoby niepełnosprawne w opiniach dzieci*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> D. Al-Khamisy, *Edukacja przedszkolna a integracja społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak", Warsaw 2006; B. Oszustowicz, *Disabled people as viewed by six-year-olds of an integrated kindergarten group (Obraz osoby niepełnosprawnej w świadomości dzieci sześciolletnich z przedszkolnej grupy integracyjnej)*, [in:] G. Dryżałowska, H. Żuraw (ed.), *Integracja społeczna osób niepełnosprawnych*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak", Warsaw 2004; J. Smogorzewska, G. Szumski, *Rozwijanie kompetencji społecznych dzieci przedszkolnych. Teoria-Metodyka-Efekty*, PWN, Warsaw 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Sekulowicz, *Kindergarten integration of children, and parents' attitudes towards disabled people (Integracja przedszkolna dzieci a postawy rodziców wobec osób niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna szansą na realizację potrzeb osób niepełnosprawnych*, ed. W. Dykciak, C. Kosakowski i J. Kuczyńska-Kwapisz, PTP, Olsztyn-Poznań-Warsaw, 2002.

has become a priority in Kazakh educational policy for the 2010s (2011-2020)<sup>16</sup>.

It is also worth observing that Kazakh pedagogy began to develop intensively upon Kazakhstan's exit from USSR in 1991. The idea of educational inclusion has been spread in Kazakhstan since 1999, a year when the National Scientific and Practical Centre for Pedagogy in Almaty launched an educational project in cooperation with UNESCO<sup>17</sup>. In 2011, the efforts from non-governmental organizations helped the country step up the activities for inclusive education. That year saw the launch of the "YES for inclusive education" campaign<sup>18</sup>. Social pro-inclusion projects have been backed by a number of theoretical, empirical and methodological studies from universities and research centres.

The review of the available literature has shown that researchers have taken great care to explore the philosophy of inclusive education and its deployment through reorganization of Kazakhstan's educational system, training projects for pedagogical staff, and development of strategies for the inclusion of students with special needs in the educational process<sup>19</sup>. Recently, much attention has been drawn to the social attractiveness of disabled children<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> [The National Programme for the Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2010-2010, Decree No. 1118 of 7 December 2010], Государственная программа развития образования РК на 2011-2020 гг. Приказ №1118 от 07.12.2010, Kazakhstan 2010.

<sup>17</sup> [G.A. Abayeva] Г.А. Абаева, *Специальное образование Республики Казахстан: 20 лет независимости*, КазГосЖЕНПУ, Алматы 2012.

<sup>18</sup> [www.inclusion.kz](http://www.inclusion.kz) (access: 12.05.2017).

<sup>19</sup> [G.A. Abayeva.] Г.А. Абаева, *Специальное образование Республики Казахстан: 20 лет независимости*, КазГосЖЕНПУ, Алматы, 2012; S.M. Kenesbaev et al., *Questions about integration of educational systems in Kazakhstan (Pytania o integrację systemów kształcenia w Kazachstanie)*, "Szkoła Specjalna," No. 5, pp. 350-360, 2015; Z.A. Movkebayeva et al., *Metodycheskiye rekomendacii po podgotovke pedagogom k vnedreniju inkluzionnogo obrazovaniya*, IP "Sagautdinova," Almaty 2013.

<sup>20</sup> L.A. Butabyeva, *Social attractiveness of disabled peers as stated by first-grade students of primary schools in Kazakhstan (Atrakcyjność społeczna rówieśnika z niepełnosprawnościami w wypowiedziach uczniów klas pierwszych kazachskich szkół)*, PhD dissertation, Library of the the Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University, Warsaw 2016.

A review of Kazakh and Russian-language (Kazakhstan's two official languages) sources has demonstrated that the problem of social perception of people with disabilities, in particular the knowledge of and attitudes towards the disabled as transmitted by parents within conversations with their children, has not been yet covered by Kazakh literature. What, therefore, makes the present study topical is the inadequate knowledge of the social attitudes towards disabled people in Kazakhstan, and the importance of this research problem is due to the pursued educational goals and the need to provide a friendly educational environment.

### **Research goal, problems, methodology and surveyed group**

The pioneering research project has been designed primarily to investigate social attractiveness of students with disabilities<sup>21</sup>. One of many objectives of this extensive research project was to examine the content of conversations that Kazakh parents have with children who attend mainstream schools and conversations by the parents with children attending inclusive schools. The content of those conversations will be analysed throughout this paper. The project primarily aimed to shed light on the following questions:

1. What types of disabilities are familiar to Kazakh parents of children attending mainstream and inclusive schools<sup>22</sup>?
2. What are the sources of their knowledge on people with disabilities?

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<sup>21</sup> L. A. Butabyeva, *Social attractiveness of disabled peers as stated by first-grade students of Kazakh primary schools (Atrakcyjność społeczna rówieśnika z niepełnosprawnością w wypowiedziach uczniów klas pierwszych kazachskich szkół)*. PhD dissertation, Archive of the Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University, Warsaw 2016.

<sup>22</sup> In Kazakhstan, an inclusive school is defined as one with groups including at least one disabled student, who, thanks to adapted methods and tools, pursues a core curriculum shared by all students. For students who cannot master the core curriculum, additional classes are offered.

3. Do they talk to their children about people with disabilities? What is the content of these conversations?
4. What is the difference between the knowledge and content of conversations between parents and children attending inclusive schools and with those attending mainstream schools?

It has been surmised that the exposure of parents and their children to disabled peers contributes to the occurrence of conversations about disabilities and impacts the content of their conversations.

The questionnaire-based survey method was employed.<sup>23</sup> The survey questionnaires contained closed and open-ended questions, particularly the following ones<sup>24</sup>:

Closed questions (YES - NO):

1. Have you had any exposure to the topic of disability?
2. Do you talk to your child about people with disabilities?

Open-ended questions:

3. What types of disability do you know?
4. Where is the source of your knowledge about people with disabilities?
5. If you talk to your children about disability, what is the content of these conversations?

Parents' statements in response to the open-ended questions have been transcribed and grouped according to relevant categories. The analysis of the research material was qualitative and quantitative and used SPSS.

The survey covered 102 parents of Kazakh nationality. Respondents provided their responses in the Kazakh language. The analysis covered 50 questionnaires filled in by parents of non-disabled first-grade students attending an inclusive school (the inclusive group) and 52 questionnaires completed by parents of non-disabled first-grade students attending a mainstream school (the

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<sup>23</sup> M. Łobocki, *Methods and techniques in pedagogical research (Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych)*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2011.

<sup>24</sup> This is the first part of the questionnaire.



mainstream group). The survey was conducted at the end of the school year 2015/2016.

The survey covered Kazakhstan's two large urban metropolitan areas: Astana (a capital city since 1997) and Almaty (former capital city). All of the guardians/parents were grouped according to the following categories: mother, father and other. The survey covered: 72 mothers, 22 fathers and other guardians (table 1). The range of respondents' age was 26-38.

Table 1. The number of guardians/parents surveyed with a breakdown into inclusive and mainstream groups

Group		Guardians/parents			Total
		Mother	Father	Other	
Inclusion group	Count	37	11	2	50
	%	74.0	22.0	4.0	100.0
Mainstream group	Count	35	11	6	52
	%	67.3	21.2	11.5	100.0
Total	Count	72	22	8	102
	%	70.6	21.6	7.8	100.0

The respondents declared completion of either vocational, secondary or university education. Parents' educational background in the mainstream group was as follows: elementary education: 3 persons (5.8%); vocational education: 19 persons (36.5%); secondary education: 20 persons (38.5%); university education: 13 persons (21.2%). The parents in the inclusive group declared the following educational background: elementary education: 2 persons (4.0%); vocational education: 18 persons (36.0%); secondary education: 20 persons (36.0%); university education: 12 persons (24.0%). No statistically significant differences were observed between the groups in terms of the sample size, sex or educational background.

## Results of personal research

### Kazakh parents' knowledge about disabled people

The parents of first-grade students were handed out questionnaires with questions on their exposure to the issue of disability, the familiarity with types of disabilities, the sources of knowledge and the content of the conversations they have with their children about disability. The questionnaires were filled at homes.

The vast majority of parents (ca. 91%) claimed that they know people with disabilities or heard of such people and have some knowledge on the subject. Such an answer was provided by all respondents of the inclusive group and the vast majority of the mainstream group parents (82.7%). 9 parents (17.3%) of children attending the mainstream school have never met a person with disability.

### Familiarity with types of disability

The authors aimed to reveal the types of disability that the parents are familiar with. Parents' written statements were matched with typical types of disability:

- People with hearing impairment;
- People with sight impairment;
- People with speech disorders;
- People with mobility impairment;
- People with intellectual disabilities.

Table 2 shows the data on the parents' familiarity with types of disability. The parents declared that they are most familiar with mobility disabilities (69 people), hearing impairment (67 people) and sight impairment (61 people), and intellectual disability was the least known (46 replies in 102 persons).

The vast majority of respondents in the inclusive group (86%) named motor, hearing and sight disabilities most frequently. Intellectual disabilities were mentioned less often in this group (36%).

Table 2. Parents’ familiarity with different types of disability, including the number of respondents

Group		Type of disability				
		Hearing	Sight	Speech	Motor disability	Intellectual disability
Inclusive group	Number of respondents	38	32	27	43	18
	%	76.0	64.0	57.4	86.0	36.0
Mainstream group	Number of respondents	29	29	25	26	28
	%	55.8	55.8	48.1	50.0	53.8
Total	Number of respondents	67	61	52	69	46
	%	65.7	59.8	52.5	67.6	45.1

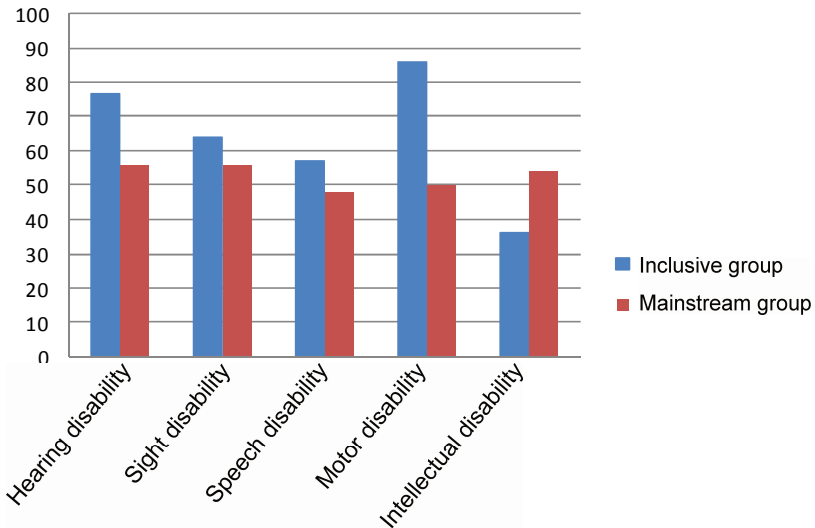


Figure 1. Types of disability that the parents are familiar with a breakdown into inclusive and mainstream groups

Adults, just as their children<sup>25</sup>, paid attention to the external manifestations of disability.

The results show that the parents of mainstream school students can be divided into two groups: those who are knowledgeable about various types of disability and those who do not have such knowledge. The parents of mainstream group students described the intellectual type of disability more often than the parents of inclusive group students did (53.8%) (Figure 1). Some of the parents could not name a specific type of disability yet did specify what they thought of as characteristics of a given type of disability such as the lack of a leg or hand. A comparative analysis of the responses regarding the familiarity with types of disability shows statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) to the advantage of the inclusive group parents.

### **Sources of knowledge about disability**

Based on parents' written statements, 5 sources of knowledge on disability were defined: the media, respondents' own experience, family, local community and educational environment. For the inclusive group parents, their children's school is the primary source of knowledge, followed by the media. Mainstream group parents first mentioned the media and then their own experience. Some of the latter were unable to name the source of their knowledge on disability.

### **Content of conversations between parents and children**

The parents were asked if they talk to their children about people with disabilities and to specify the content of their conversations.

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<sup>25</sup> L. A. Butabayeva, *Social attractiveness of disabled peers as stated by first-grade students of Kazakh primary schools (Atrakcyjność społeczna rówieśnika z niepełnosprawnością w wypowiedziach uczniów klas pierwszych kazachskich szkół)*. PhD dissertation, Archive of the Maria Grzegorzewska Pedagogical University, Warsaw 2016.

Table 3. The number of parents who talk to their children about disabilities

Group		Conversations		Total
		Yes	No	
Inclusive group	Number of respondents	44	6	50
	%	88.0	12.0	100.0
Mainstream group	Number of respondents	30	22	52
	%	57.7	42.3	100.0
Total	Number of respondents	74	28	102
	%	72.5	27.5	100.0

A total of 72.5% of all respondents provided positive responses to the question about whether they talk to their children about people with disabilities (Table 3). More than half (57.7%) of mainstream group parents said that at home they discussed the topic of disability with their children; other parents of this group (42.3%) provided negative responses to this question. The majority of inclusive group respondents (88%) said they talked to their children mainly about their disabled schoolmates.

Written statements about the content of conversations the inclusive group parents have with their children cover the following themes (Table 4):

- 1) Nurturing the attitude of non-aggression towards children with disabilities: 26 people (52%). Typical statements: *do not hurt them; they are ill; don't tease them; you can't laugh at them*: 24 people; *you should be polite to them*: 2 persons. Parental message: tolerate them when they are around, don't discriminate against them. This shapes an image of the disabled as people who are likely to be hurt because of their otherness, weakness, or illness.
- 2) Nurturing the attitude that stresses the need to help children with disabilities: 12 people (24%). Typical statements: *one needs to help them* (5 people); *help them* (7 people). Parental message: be ready to provide help and help them, be empa-

- thetic. This shapes an image of a disabled child as a person who needs help;
- 3) Raising children's awareness and shaping an image of the disabled as a person who is special and yet just like people without disabilities: 3 people (6%). Typical statements: *These kids are the same, they are just like you; my child should think of them well.* Parental message: be their friend, they are your peers. This shapes an image of disabled children as being exceptional and yet identical to one's own child;
  - 4) No response to the question / parents' having no conversations in question with their children (18%).

Table 4. The content of conversations about disability as stated by inclusive group parents

No.	Categories of responses	Frequency	%	
1	Nurturing the attitude of non-aggression towards children with disabilities	<i>One must not hurt them</i> <i>Do not hurt them</i>	21	42.0
		<i>One should be polite to them; I want my child to think of them well</i>	3	6.0
		<i>You can't laugh at them</i> <i>They are ill, don't tease them</i>	2	4.0
		Total	26	52.0
2	Nurturing the attitude that stresses the need to help children with disabilities	<i>Help them; one needs to help them</i>	12	24.0
		Total	12	24.0
3	Knowledge Children who are special and yet just like you	<i>They are special</i>	1	2.0
		<i>These kids are the same, they are just like you</i>	1	2.0
		<i>I want my child to know</i>	1	2.0
		Total	3	6.0
4	No conversations, other	No response	5	10.0
		<i>I don't know what to say</i>	1	2.0
		<i>Sometimes</i>	3	6.0
		Total	9	18.0
Total		50	100.0	

Nearly 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the inclusive group parents (9 people, i.e. 18%) have not disclosed the subject of their conversations (no response: 5 people; 1 person: *I don't know what to say*; 3 people: *sometimes*). Importantly, 6 parents (12%) of this group have never discussed disability with their children (Table 4).

Themes of the conversations that mainstream group parents have with their children (Table 5):

- 1) Nurturing the attitude of non-aggression towards children with disabilities: 4 people (7.7%). Typical statements: no need to hurt them, no need to ridicule them;
- 2) Nurturing the attitude that stresses the need to help children with disabilities: 11 people (21.0%). Typical statement: *one needs to help them*;
- 3) Raising children's awareness (17.5%): 5 people; and shaping an image of the disabled as a person who is special and yet just like people without disabilities: 4 people. Typical statements: *I want him to know about them, they are children, too*;
- 4) Shaping the image of one's own child as a person that is healthy, non-disabled and normal: 4 persons (7.6%). Typical statements: *so that he can appreciate his own health, so that he can understand that he is normal*. Parental message: you are normal: the person with disabilities is abnormal and inferior;
- 5) No conversations due to parent's fear of their child's encounter with a disabled person: 11 parents (21.2%). Typical statements: *He's too small, I don't want to scare him/her*;
- 6) No conversations, other: 13 people, 25%; no response: 12 people; and *I don't know what to say*: 1 person.

Compared to the inclusive group parents, twice as many parents in the mainstream group (24 people, or 46.2%) have never discussed the topic of disabilities with their children (Table 4, boxes 5 and 6 combined). Half of them does not justify this stance (12 people). The others believe that their children are still too small (5 people) to discuss such topics with them because a conversation of this kind may scare them (2 people). Therefore, according to those parents, it is better not to raise this issue until the child asks itself (2 people).

One mother does not want her daughter to know anything about disabilities. The Table 5 contains responses provided by those parents under the category “Fear of contact”.

Table 5. The content of conversations about disability as stated by the mainstream group parents

No.	Categories of responses	Frequency	%	
1	Nurturing the attitude of non-aggression towards children with disabilities	<i>One must not hurt them</i>	2	3.8
		<i>One must not ridicule them</i>	2	3.8
		Total	4	7.7
2	Nurturing the attitude that stresses the need to help children with disabilities	<i>One should help them; I want him to understand and help them</i>	11	21.0
		Total	11	21.0
3	Knowledge (Children that are special but just like you)	<i>She should know that; so that he knows about them; I'm going to try to explain it to him/her; So that he isn't scared as he meets them</i>	5	9.8
		<i>They are children, too</i>	4	7.7
		Total	9	17.5
4	Shaping the image of one's own child	<i>I compare his capabilities</i>	1	1.9
		<i>To make him appreciate his health</i>	1	1.9
		<i>To make him understand he is normal</i>	1	1.9
		<i>So that he can appreciate his own health</i>	1	1.9
		Total	4	7.6
5	No conversations: fear of contact	<i>He is too small; she is still very young</i>	5	9.8
		<i>He hasn't asked yet; if he/she asks</i>	3	5.7
		<i>I don't want to worry my child; I'm anxious to scare him/her</i>	2	3.8
		<i>I don't want her to know</i>	1	1.9
		Total	11	21.2
6	No conversations: other	No response	12	23.1
		<i>I don't know what to say</i>	1	1.9
		Total	13	25.0
Total			52	100.0



Table 6. Statistical analysis indices for the number of parents in inclusive and mainstream groups who discuss disability with their children

Indices	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	Exact significance (2-sided)	Exact significance (1-sided)
Pearson's chi-squared test	11.757	1	0.001	-	-
Yates correction	10.284	1	0.001	-	-
Likelihood ratio	12.345	1	0.000	-	-
Fisher's exact test	-	-	-	0.001	0.001
Linear-by-linear association	11.642	1	0.001	-	-
N of valid cases	102	-	-	-	-

A comparative analysis using Pearson's chi-squared tests shows that the number of inclusive group parents who discuss disability with their children is significantly larger than the number of mainstream group parents who do so ( $p < 0,01$ ) (Table 6).

Based on the data provided in the survey questionnaire by parents of first-grade students of Kazakh elementary schools, we can draw the following conclusions:

- 1) The majority of both groups' respondents have had some exposure to the issue of disability;
- 2) The parents of inclusive school children are more knowledgeable about types of disabilities than the parents of mainstream school children; the differences are statistically significant at  $p < 0,01$ ;
- 3) The knowledge in the parents of inclusive school children comes largely from their children's educational environment and the media, and that in parents of mainstream school children, from the media and their own experience (work, street, living with a disabled person);
- 4) The vast majority of the parents of inclusive school students discuss the issue of disabilities with their children; the differ-

- ences with the parents of mainstream school children are statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ ;
- 5) In their home conversations with children, parents of both groups articulate the attitude that stresses non-aggression towards children with disabilities (*do not hurt them, they are just like you*) and empathetic behaviour (*help them*);
  - 6) The parents of inclusive school children pay much more attention to non-aggression, non-teasing and helping peers with disabilities than the parents of mainstream school children do;
  - 7) In their conversations, the parents of the mainstream group to a greater extent stress the fear of their child's encountering a disabled child, who might be physically different and thus scare the non-disabled child;
  - 8) In a handful of cases, parents of the mainstream group voiced a concept of a disabled child being abnormal and inferior (e.g. comparing children's capabilities), which is likely based on stereotypes.

## Discussion

The survey of the knowledge about disability as stated by Kazakh parents of children attending mainstream and inclusive schools has demonstrated differences between the compared groups. It has been revealed that the parents of the inclusive group were more knowledgeable about types of disability. Besides the media, they declared that their children's educational environment, their inclusive school, was the primary source of their knowledge. Polish studies show that parents of children in integrated groups are more knowledgeable about disability than parents of children attending mainstream kindergartens<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, the parents of

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<sup>26</sup> M. Sekułowicz, *Pre-school integration of children and parents' attitudes towards disabled people (Integracja przedszkolna dzieci a postawy rodziców wobec osób niepełnosprawnych)*, [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna szansą na realizację potrzeb osób niepełnosprawnych*

children attending integrated facilities are more interested in specialist literature and advice<sup>27</sup>. We can thus see the influence that social context has on the knowledge about disability in both Kazakh and Polish parents.

More than 2/3 (72.5%) of Kazakh parents discuss disability with their children. Aneta Soroka-Fedorczuk<sup>28</sup> has posed the same question to 299 Polish parents of 1<sup>st</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students attending mainstream and integrated groups. Ca. 84% of parents provided positive responses. Unfortunately, the author has not provided a breakdown into specific types of schools. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Polish and Kazakh parents talk to their children about disabilities. This occurs much more often at homes of children who receive education together with their disabled peers.

The content of Kazakh families' conversations is mainly aimed at nurturing the attitude of non-aggression in their children, as well as acceptance of and readiness to help children with disabilities. A similar question has also been also investigated by Aneta Soroka-Fedorczuk. The researcher studied conversations between Polish parents and their children<sup>29</sup>. The results of her research demonstrate that ca. 24% of conversations stress the provision of help, ca. 20% regard tolerance and 12% of the conversations are to enlarge children's knowledge about disability. In the light of Dominika Przybyszewska's<sup>30</sup> research, parents choose integrated schools for their non-disabled children as they believe in equality and want their

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nych, ed. W. Dykcił, C. Kosakowski and J. Kuczyńska-Kwapisz, PTP, Olsztyn-Poznań-Warsaw 2002.

<sup>27</sup> D. Al-Khamisy, *Edukacja przedszkolna a integracja społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak," Warsaw 2006.

<sup>28</sup> A. Soroka-Fedorczuk, *Osoby niepełnosprawne w opiniach dzieci*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> D. Przybyszewska, *Parents of students attending integrated groups – their expectations and motifs (Rodzice uczniów kształcących się w klasach integracyjnych – ich oczekiwania i motyw)*, "Interdyscyplinarne konteksty pedagogiki specjalnej," 2014, No. 6, p. 60.

children to learn to help and treat everyone kindly. Hence, regardless of their nationality and cultural background, parents believe that acceptance of otherness and social sensitivity are important aspects of living together. This also attests to the influence of factors related to one's social milieu<sup>31</sup>: the more often one sees disabled people and the greater the intimacy between the non-disabled and the disabled, the greater the tolerance and the fewer concern parents have about non-disabled children's contact with their disabled peers.

## Summary

The study has provided valuable insights into declarations by Kazakh parents regarding their familiarity with types of disabilities, sources of their knowledge, and the content of conversations they have with their children. The most important source of knowledge in parents of inclusive school children is the educational environment of their children. The parents of children attending the mainstream school gain their knowledge and experience in direct and indirect encounters with disabled people, in their workplaces and housing communities. The source of information about disability shared by both groups are the media: Internet and TV.

The parents of children attending the inclusive school are able to name more types of disability than parents of mainstream school children. The former are particularly well informed on mobility, hearing and sight disabilities since their children attend a school that includes children with those disabilities.

Written statements provided by the parents of children attending the mainstream school show that they have had some exposure to hearing and sight disabilities, as well as intellectual disabilities. They think of students with sensory disabilities as ones who suffer

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<sup>31</sup> R. Zaions, *Attitudinal effects of mere exposure*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology," Vol. 9, 1968.

from developmental delays that might hinder the educational process in inclusive school groups.<sup>32</sup>

We might conclude that Kazakh parents do discuss the issue of disability with their children, yet mothers and fathers of children attending the inclusive school pay much more attention to the subject. The conversations that parents have with their mainstream school children nurture the attitude that stresses non-aggression towards and help for children with disabilities; some of them also seek to build their own children's image as being healthy and fit, unlike children with disabilities. This is a negative phenomenon that reinforces and communicates a stereotype of a disabled person that is "different" and inferior. Every 5<sup>th</sup> parent of this group is concerned about their son's/daughter's contact with disabled children. The conversations that parents have with their inclusive school children primarily stress non-aggression and the need to provide help. Building an image of the disabled peer as an identical person is virtually absent from this group of parents.

The analysis shows that the parental message in the inclusive group puts greater emphasis on tolerance and non-aggression towards disabled peers than in the mainstream group. The study also revealed a new thematic category, that is the negative stereotypical view of a disabled person as an abnormal person, a concept based on which an image of one's own child may be built, an image of a person who is complete, healthy and normal.

Developing an inclusive environment is a noble idea and also a great challenge to social and educational policies of any state. Kazakhstan has made clear progress in this area so far; however, it is not easy to reach the set objective as this calls not only for smart decisions and funding, but, most importantly, changes in the social image of the disabled.

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<sup>32</sup> E. M. Kulesza, L. A. Butabayeva, *Pros and cons of inclusive education as stated by Kazakh parents of first-grade students (Plusy i minusy edukacji włączającej w opinii kazachskich rodziców uczniów klas pierwszych)*, „[Actual Problems of the Correctional Education (pedagogical sciences)]. Aktualni pitannya korekcyjnnoy osvity. Zbirk naukovykh prac” 2017, Medobori-2006, Kamianiec-Podilskij, Issue 9, vol. 2, pp. 85-95.

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