DOMINIKA PRZYBYSZEWSKA

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Functioning of inclusion classrooms in the opinion of parents – organization, teacher training, individualized instruction and social relations

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Inclusive education is one of the available forms of education for students with disabilities in Poland. Inclusion classrooms have fewer student and an additional teacher assistant. The schools in which this type of education takes place should meet a number of requirements. They start with the infrastructure and available teaching aids, and end with the teacher training and the availability of specialists. However, these are only prerequisites. In addition to them, the attitude of teachers and their training, the atmosphere prevailing in the school and the relations between students are important. All these elements are components on which success depends. The article presents the opinions of parents whose children attend such classes. Their voice is consistent with the results obtained by other researchers and the reports of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK)- there are no teaching aids, it is not always possible to talk to specialists (staff shortages), the individualization used in working with students is insufficient, and the relations in classes are only seemingly good.

KEY WORDS: inclusion classrooms, individualization, children with disabilities

The education system in Poland provides for special education schools, special education classrooms, inclusion classrooms and mainstream (also called general) schools and classrooms. Special needs education is also provided in special teaching and care centers and therapeutic institutions (e.g. health resorts). All these types of classrooms and schools may be attended by pupils with disabilities. A decision on the type of education to be attended by a child is made by parents/legal guardians, and professionals from a psychological and pedagogical counseling center only present their suggestions. In the 2016/2017 school year, pupils with a special needs education statement attended different types of schools. In primary schools, there were 73,311 pupils with special educational needs (3.19% of all pupils in primary schools), of which 24,298 in special needs institutions[1]. According to the Supreme Audit Office (NIK), of the total number of children with disabilities, 19% attended inclusion schools and classrooms in the year 2016/2017, and 39% – mainstream schools and classrooms[2].

According to the data of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, in the 2010/2011 school year, public schools in Poland were attended by 154,870 pupils with disabilities, of which more than 55% were in segregated special schools, in segregated special classes in mainstream schools – nearly 2% and in inclusions classes – over 42%[3]. The above data sources suggest that most pupils with special educational needs attended non-segregated institutions, i.e. inclusive or mainstream schools. Currently, the Polish education system is aiming at gradually increasing the per-

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[1] Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski 2017,* Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych, Warszawa 2017, p. 206.

[2] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami w ogólnodostępnych szkołach i przedszkolach*, Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, Warszawa 2017, p. 7, https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,16353,vp,18878.pdf [accessed on: 12.07.2018].

[3] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Special Needs Education – Country Data*, 2012, p. 52-53, http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/sne-country-data-2012/sne-country-data-2012 [accessed on: 6.07.2018].

centage share of pupils in non-segregated education. Our country, being an EU Member State, has adopted the idea of integrated and inclusive education[4].

Pupils with special education needs receive an individual teaching and therapeutic program, regardless of the type of school or class they attend[5]. Also, the existing legal regulations give room for significant individualization of assistance provided to children with special educational needs, including assistance in the classroom and other forms of help: therapeutic activities, talent-based activities, activities stimulating learning skills, remedial classes, specialist assistance: corrective and compensatory therapy, speech therapy, stimulating emotional and social skills and other forms of therapy, assistance in choosing further education and vocation – in the case of primary and secondary school pupils, individualized teaching path; advice, consultations and workshops[6].

There is also a teacher assistant in a inclusion classroom, qualified in special needs education. Similar is the case in mainstream schools and preschools that teach pupils with special educational needs because of autism, Asperger syndrome or multiple disabilities (in such cases, instead of a teacher assistant, it is possible to engage a specialist, assistant or teacher aid). This is subject to the consent of the governing authority with respect to schools that teach children with different kinds of disabilities, adaptive problems or at

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[4] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, *Kluczowe zasady służące promocji jakości w edukacji włączającej – zalecenia dla decydentów*. Europejska Agencja Rozwoju Edukacji Uczniów ze Specjalnymi Potrzebami, Odense, Denmark 2009, p. 7.

[5] Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. Prawo oświatowe; art. 127; Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie warunków organizowania kształcenia, wychowania i opieki dla dzieci i młodzieży niepełnosprawnych, niedostosowanych społecznie i zagrożonych niedostosowaniem społecznym, par 6.

[6] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach, par. 6.

risk of developing adaptive problems[7]. Importantly, the curriculum in an inclusion classroom is the same as in a mainstream classroom. What differs are the methods, forms and means of teaching. A separate curriculum is only available to children with more severe intellectual disabilities[8].

The provisions governing inclusion classrooms determine the number of pupils in one classroom – no more than 20, of which no more than 5 pupils with disabilities[9].

The number of pupils provided for in legal regulations coincides with the results of research conducted among teachers in late 1980s by Heinz Gruber and Gottfried Petri, which showed that their work is the most effective in groups of 15 to 20 pupils, including 3 to 4 children with disabilities. According to some respondents, the number of pupils in a classroom should depend on the type and degree of disability[10]. Also Jadwiga Bogucka writes: "There should be no more than 20 pupils in inclusion classrooms (data based on 10 years of experience of professor Hans Wocken)"[11].

The functioning of inclusion classrooms and enabling children with disabilities to learn in mainstream schools is in line with the model of educating children with special educational needs adapted in Poland in recent years, which increases the accessibility of psy-

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[7] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie warunków organizowania kształcenia, wychowania i opieki dla dzieci i młodzieży niepełnosprawnych, niedostosowanych społecznie i zagrożonych niedostosowaniem społecznym, par. 7.

[8] Rozporządzenie Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej z 28 marca 2017 r. w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół.

[9] Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 27 marca 2017 r. w sprawie szczegółowej organizacji publicznych szkół i publicznych przedszkoli, par. 6.

[10] H. Gruber, G. Petri, *Integracja dzieci upośledzonych i zdrowych w Austrii*, [in:] *Wychowanie i nauczanie integracyjne*, ed. J. Bogucka, M. Kościelska, Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe, Warszawa 1994, p. 38-39.

[11] J. Bogucka, *Warunki tworzenia grup integracyjnych*, [in:] *Wychowanie i nauczanie integracyjne*, ed. J. Bogucka, M. Kościelska, Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe, Warszawa 1994, p. 162.

chological and pedagogical assistance[12]. However, it is not that easy to implement the model. A classroom must meet a number of conditions to enable a child with disability to fully develop his or her skills and gain knowledge. Of course, a school should have the right infrastructure and teaching aids to enable a pupil to discover the world around him or her. It is important for a school to be accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal access to education to this social group. In particular, schools with inclusion classrooms must have a number of facilities, such as wheelchair ramps, wide doors, lifts and suitable bathrooms. Removing architectural barriers is the first step towards implementing the idea of inclusion. Building facilities are among the conditions that need to be met in order for inclusion to be effective[13].

Also important are teacher training and relations in the classroom. The latter is associated with social integration of pupils with limited abilities and abled pupils. It is often subject to evaluation and is an indicator of the effectiveness of non-segregated education.

Socially integrated persons are considered to be those who have many friends and acquaintances among abled persons and feel accepted by them. An important indicator is also a sense of satisfaction with these interpersonal relations. Some researchers also consider: the motivation to learn, the level of school fear and satisfaction with attending an educational institution[14]. Jarosław Bąbka also

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[12] M. Jas, M. Jarosińska, *Specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne dzieci i młodzieży. Prawne ABC dyrektora przedszkola, szkoły i placówki.* Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Warszawa 2010, p. 11.

[13] S. Mihilewicz, *Postrzeganie integracji przez rodziców dzieci sprawnych i niepełnosprawnych*, [in:] *Integracja osób niepełnosprawnych w edukacji i interakcjach społecznych*, ed. Z. Kazanowski, D. Osik-Chudowolska D., Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2003, p. 336.

[14] E.g.: Haeberlin et al (1991), Willand (1999) after: G. Szumski, *Integracyjne kształcenie niepełnosprawnych. Sens i granice zmiany edukacyjnej.* Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 152-154.

notes: positive attitude to the teacher and establishing relations with peers[15].

Research conducted by Anna Firkowskiej-Mankiewicz shows that graduates of educational institutions more frequently achieve a higher social status (higher prestige of jobs and profession, and higher income) than their peers who attended segregated special schools. They also have better contacts with other people. Meanwhile, segregated special schools increase self-satisfaction and the level of education of their graduates compared to mainstream schools[16].

A review of research shows that pupils with disabilities attending non-segregated forms of education achieve better at school[17]. This is confirmed by research conducted by Iwona Chrzanowska, who analyzed the performance of primary school 1st to 3rd graders with mild intellectual disabilities and discovered statistically significant differences between segregated and inclusive education. 1st to 3rd graders in mainstream schools achieved better results in Polish language. The scope of mathematical knowledge was also higher in non-segregated education – the researcher noted statistically significant differences in the 2nd and 3rd grades[18].

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[15] J. Bąbka, *Psychospołeczne aspekty efektywności edukacji dzieci w systemie integracyjnym,* [in:] *Integracja osób niepełnosprawnych w edukacji i interakcjach społecznych,* ed. Z. Kazanowski, S. Osik-Chudowolska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2003, p. 252-253, cf J Bąbka, *Obraz dziecka niepełnosprawnego w literaturze a idea integracji,* [in:] *Wychowanie i nauczanie integracyjne*, ed. J. Bogucka, M. Kościelska, Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe, Warszawa 1994.

[16] A. Firkowskiej-Mankiewicz, G. Szumski, *Wokół edukacji włączającej. Efekty kształcenia uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu lekkim w klasach specjalnych, integracyjnych i ogólnodostępnych,* Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa 2010, p. 57-58; G. Szumski, *Integracyjne kształcenie niepełnosprawnych. Sens i granice zmiany edukacyjnej.* Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 145-146.

[17] Ibidem, p. 61-62. G. Szumski, op. cit., p. 148-152.

[18] I. Chrzanowska, *Funkcjonowanie dzieci upośledzonych umysłowo w stopniu lekkim w szkole podstawowej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2003.

Despite positive assessment of inclusion education, certain deficiencies are noted, such as:

– the curriculum not tailored to child's needs,
– fixed lesson plan,
– teachers not trained to work with children with special educational needs,
– shortage of professionals,
– not enough teaching aids,
– lack of accommodated physical education program and excessive use of medical leaves,
– too many pupils in classrooms,
– age differences – children with disabilities are usually older than other pupils in a classroom,
– a child with disability is on a worse sociometric position than his or her abled peers,
– pressure to achieve high results, which influences relations in a group,
– the school infrastructure not accommodated to special needs,
– low availability of teaching tools,
– limited number of hours of additional activities with children with disabilities,
– shortcomings in the planning, implementation and evaluation of pupil support measures,
– insufficient supervision and monitoring of special needs education,
– failure to make use of the funds available to special needs education,
– lack of actual and constructive understanding and acceptance of inclusive educational of pupils with special educational needs and abled pupils[19].

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[19] A. Hulek, *Pedagogika rewalidacyjna,* Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1977, p. 499-500; I. Chrzanowska, *Problemy edukacji dzieci i młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością. Regionalna specyfik czy ogólnopolska tendencja?*, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls", Kraków 2010, p. 19-69; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Informacja o wynikach kontroli organizacji i finansowania kształcenia osób niepełnosprawnych w szko-*

Additionally, implementation of non-segregated education is hindered by the fact that teachers who work with children with special educational needs do not feel appreciated, the assistance of other persons is ineffective and curricula are not relevant. Classrooms with children with disabilities are stigmatized and treated as "poorer"[20].

The focus of own research

The starting point for my own research was to analyze the opinions of parents about the infrastructure of buildings, the size of classes, the availability of professionals (diagnosing, consulting, advising), teacher qualifications, accommodations and social relations. The main problems were included in the following questions:

łach publicznych, Najwyższa Izba Kontroli. Delegatura w Zielonej Górze, Zielona Góra 2003, p. 27-32; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego…*, p. 10, https://www. nik.gov.pl/plik/id,16353,vp,18878.pdf [accessed on: 12.07.2018]; J. Lipińska, A. Rogoża, *Stosunek i zachowanie dzieci pełnosprawnych wobec dzieci niepełnosprawnych w klasach integracyjnych,* [in:] *Integracja osób niepełnosprawnych w edukacji i interakcjach społecznych,* ed. Z. Kazanowski, D. Osik-Chudowolska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2003; K. Ćwirynkało, *Pozycja socjometryczna uczniów niepełnosprawnych a postawa nauczycieli wobec integracji,* [in:] *Integracja osób niepełnosprawnych w edukacji i interakcjach społecznych,* ed. Z. Kazanowski, D. Osik-Chudowolska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2003; B. Oszustowicz, *Społeczno-ekonomiczne bariery integracji społecznej w rodzinie dziecka z upośledzeniem umysłowym,* [in:] *Pedagogika specjalna – aktualne osiągnięcia i wyzwania,* ed. T. Żółkowska, Oficyna Wydawnicza In Plus, Szczecin 2005; B. Jachimczak, I. Chrzanowska, *Praca wychowawcza w grupie zróżnicowanej – uczeń ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w szkole ogólnodostępnej,* [in:] *Wychowawcze i społecznokulturowe kompetencje współczesnych nauczycieli*, ed. J. Pyżalski, theQ studio, Łódź 2015, p. 182-183; B. Jachimczak, I. Chrzanowska, *Kompetencje współczesnych nauczycieli a praca z dzieckiem ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w szkole,* [in:] *Nauczyciel w ponowoczesnym świecie od założeń teoretycznych do rozwoju kompetencji,* ed. J. Pyżalski, theQ studio, Łódź 2015, p. 67-68; Z. Gajdzica, *Sytuacje trudne w opinii nauczycieli klas integracyjnych,* Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls", Kraków 2011, p. 162-163.

[20] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego…*, p. 15; 68-69.

a) How well is an institution that offers inclusive education accommodated to the needs of pupils with special educational needs in the opinion of parents?

b) What is the parents' opinion on the quality of teacher work in inclusion classrooms?

c) What is the parents' opinion on the social relations in inclusion classrooms?

Specific problems were presented as follows:

1. What is the parents' opinion on the accommodation of school infrastructure to the needs of persons with disabilities?

2. What is the parents' opinion on the number of pupils in classrooms?

3. What is the parents' opinion on the availability of professionals at school?

4. Do parents think teachers are well trained to work in inclusion classrooms?

5. Do parents think teachers are well qualified to work in inclusion classrooms?

6. Which aspects of teacher training, according to parents, are the most relevant to the work in inclusion classrooms?

7. Do parents think that requirements are well accommodated to the possibilities of pupils with disabilities?

8. What is the parents' opinion on the relations between teachers at school?

9. What is the parents' opinion on the relations between pupils at school?

10. What is the parents' opinion on the relations between teachers and pupils at school?

The research uses the diagnostic analysis method, and the research tool was a closed-ended questions survey.

The research group were 70 persons – parents of children attending inclusion classrooms in four different primary schools in the city of Poznan. Among the respondents, the age groups were as follows:

– 25 to 34 years of age – 14 respondents, i.e. 20% of the total group;
– 35 to 44 years of age – 42 respondents, i.e. 60% of the total group;
– above 44 years of age – 14 respondents, i.e. 20% of the total group;

The education level of the respondents was:
– basic education – 2 respondents, i.e. 2.86% of the total group;
– vocational education – 12 respondents, i.e. 17.14% of the total group;
– secondary education – 23 respondents, i.e. 32.86% of the total group;
– higher education – 33 respondents, i.e. 47.14% of the total group.

Results of the research

The respondents were asked to evaluate the following aspects of the accommodation of building infrastructure:
– condition of school buildings;
– layout of important rooms;
– facilities for persons with disabilities and their layout.

Table 1. School infrastructure in the opinion of parents – evaluation

School infrastructure	Evaluation						total
	unsatisfactory		average		very good		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Condition of school buildings	19	27.14	43	61.43	8	11.43	70
Layout of important rooms	19	27.14	46	65.71	5	7.14	70
Facilities for persons with disabilities and their layout	10	14.29	39	55.71	21	30.00	70

Source: own elaboration

The vast majority of respondents evaluated both the condition of the buildings and the layout of important rooms and facilities for persons with disabilities to be average (cf. Table 1). Parents' evaluation of the removal of architectural barriers and accommodation of school buildings was much more positive than of their condition and the layout of important rooms (such as the front office, secretariats, psychologist/school counsellor rooms, toilets, gyms, libraries and other). This is in line with the results of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) report, according to which, in many schools, architectural barriers have not been completely removed and only few schools have therapy rooms[21]. Similar is the opinion of assistant teachers surveyed by Zenon Gajdzica[22]. They see shortcomings in the removal of architectural barriers and lack of teaching tools for pupils with special educational needs.

Respondents were asked about their opinion on the number of pupils in classrooms. More than 90% of respondents think that the number of pupils in classrooms is adequate (cf. Table 2). It is worth noting, however, that some think that there are too many pupils given the conditions of a classroom. This shows that, in the parents' opinion, not all classrooms are accommodated to have more pupils in them. The NIK report says that, in some schools: "classrooms were not sufficient given the number of pupils with individualized education"[23]. In Z. Gajdzica's research, teachers suggest "reducing the number of pupils" as one of the possible changes in inclusive education[24]. The differences in opinions may be due to the different perspectives. For parents, the number of pupils in a classroom seems optimum – it is lower than in regular classes. Educators, however, notice the many and different problems of pupils and the associated teaching challenges.

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[21] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego…*, p. 70.
[22] Z. Gajdzica, op. cit., p. 165-166.
[23] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego…*, p. 72.
[24] Z. Gajdzica, op. cit., p. 189.

Table 2. Number of pupils in classrooms in the opinion of parents

Number of pupils in classrooms in the opinion of parents	N = 70	
	n	%
Too few pupils	0	0.00
The right number of pupils	64	91.43
Too many pupils given the condition of a classroom	4	5.71
Too many pupils with disabilities in a classroom	1	1.43
Too many pupils given the number of teachers	1	1.43

Source: own elaboration

In order to ensure effective education of children with special educational needs and the most convenient conditions for development, it is important to include parents in the work of the professionals[25]. Work with a pupil will only be effective if there is regular exchange of information and contacts, based on the principle of partnership and goodwill, between the family home and school.

Table 3. Availability of professionals in the opinion of parents

Availability of professionals in the opinion of parents	very good		good		sufficient		insufficient	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
School counsellor	45	64.3	18	25.7	3	4.3	4	5.7
Special needs education counsellor	21	30	31	44.3	11	15.7	7	10
Psychologist	29	41.4	25	35.7	13	18.6	3	4.3
Speech therapist	23	32.9	23	32.9	17	24.2	7	10
Rehabilitation therapist	18	25.7	20	28.6	19	27.1	13	18.6

Source: own elaboration

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[25] J. Bogucka, op. cit., p. 23.

The respondents also evaluated the availability of professionals at school:
– school counsellor,
– special needs education counsellor,
– psychologist,
– speech therapist,
– rehabilitation therapist.

Most respondents think positive about availability of professionals at schools. Parents find it the easiest to see a school counsellor (more than every other respondent said they could always contact a school counsellor and every third said it was often possible). The availability of a psychologist and special needs education counsellor was somewhat worse according to the respondents. Most parents declare that they may be consulted always or often. According to the responses, parents in most cases are also able to contact a speech therapist. Parents find it much more difficult to see a rehabilitation therapist, although there was one in every school. On the one hand, almost every third respondent thinks it is always possible, but on the other hand, more then one in five respondents think it is impossible. It should also be noted that the availability of respective professionals does not depend on the school. What matters, however, is the cooperation between parents and teachers, which should not only be based on formal rules but also arise from the needs of both parties. Z. Gajdzica emphasizes the role of the school counsellor in this case[26]. His or her availability is an important element of the success of the education process in an inclusive institution.

According to parents' evaluation of school functioning, the condition of buildings, the layout of important rooms and facilities for persons with disabilities are average. Encouragingly, though, the vast majority of parents thing that the number of pupils in classroom is adequate. Also positive evaluation of the availability of the

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[26] Z. Gajdzica, op. cit., p. 181.

school counsellors, special needs education counsellor and speech therapist is optimistic. On the other hand, the contrasting evaluation of the availability of rehabilitation therapist is worrying.

Similar were the conclusions of the NIK report, according to which, in more than half of the surveyed schools, the principals did not manage to hire competent professionals for rehabilitation and psychological and pedagogical assistance[27].

Another viral element of the functioning of an integration school is teacher training. It concerns both the teaching skills and qualifications of teachers, and the very important psychological skills. The latter is particularly important in teaching groups (in the case of schools – classroom teams) whose members have their abilities limited in different ways. Aneta Jegier emphasizes in her publication the role of the educational and psychological training of teachers, and their interpersonal skills[28]. Beata Jachimczak and Iwona Chrzanowska highlight the importance of a tolerant attitude, noting that formal competencies (including the ability to select teaching methods and forms and knowledge about disability) may be quickly learned compared to social competencies (associated with the attitude and system of values)[29].

Apart from the quality of transmitting knowledge and developing respective skills, of particular importance in inclusion schools are the relations between respective groups. The show whether the idea of integration is properly implemented and whether a classroom constitutes a uniform whole, without subgroups based on the criterion of ability.

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[27] Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego…*, p. 75.

[28] A. Jegier, *Przygotowanie dzieci pełnosprawnych do życia w integracji z osobami niepełnosprawnymi,* [in:] *Integracja społeczna osób niepełnosprawnych,* ed. G. Dryżałowska, H. Żuraw, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak", Warszawa 2004, p. 268, A. Jegier, *Rola rodziny w przygotowaniu dziecka z niepełnosprawnością do edukacji,* [in:] *Wsparcie dziecka z niepełnosprawnością w rodzinie i szkole,* ed. D. Gorajewska, Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Integracji, Warszawa 2008, p. 117-118.

[29] B. Jachimczak, I. Chrzanowska, op. cit., p. 68-69.

Table 4. Parents' opinion on the quality of teacher work in inclusion classrooms

Teacher in the school that the child attends:	Total	
	Σ	%
Knowledge and skills concerning the teaching subject and content		
Has extensive knowledge about the subject he or she teaches	44	62.86
Updates his or her knowledge	13	18.57
Apply methods that help remember the most important information	21	30.00
Present the topic at the beginning of a lesson	12	17.14
TOTAL	90	32.14
Knowledge and skills associated with the organization of teaching – methods, forms, means		
Present examples of the topics discussed	24	34.29
Organize team work	38	54.29
Use relevant aids	17	24.29
Give relevant homework	24	34.29
TOTAL	103	36.79
Teaching and psychological knowledge and skills		
Sees the child's strengths	39	55.71
Is patient	37	52.86
Includes all pupils in the life of the classroom and school	30	42.86
Talks to pupils	32	45.71
TOTAL	138	49.29
Teacher traits		
Gives fair grades	35	50.00
Copes well with stressful situations	27	38.57
Can cooperate with others	30	42.86
Is a good organizer	25	35.71
TOTAL	117	41.79
Skills associated with managing cooperation with parents		
Is easy to contact	52.	74.29
Consults parents before making a decision	36	51.43
Uses forms of work that stimulate parent integration	17	24.29
Explains the plans and goals of work in a classroom	28	40.00
TOTAL	133	47.50

Source: own elaboration

The research tried to list the important elements comprising effective inclusive education, which were then evaluated by parents. In order to find out about the opinions of the main caregivers on the teachers working with their children, the survey asked the respondents to identify the behavior of educators by selecting the relevant options in a cafeteria-style list. They concerned five groups of knowledge, skills and personality of teachers:

- knowledge and skills concerning the teaching subject and content,
- knowledge and skills associated with the organization of teaching – methods, forms, means,
- teaching and psychological knowledge and skills,
- teacher traits,
- skills associated with managing cooperation with parents.

The respondents evaluated teachers in various areas. The difference between the category with the most frequently selected and the least often selected options was more than 17%. The most often selected options belonged to the following categories:

- teaching and psychological knowledge and skills (49.29% of all responses)
- skills associated with managing cooperation with parents (47.5% of all responses)
- teacher traits (41.79% of all responses).

The least often selected options concerned knowledge and skills concerning the teaching subject and content (32.14% of all responses). This shows that parents have a more positive opinion about the knowledge and skills of teachers associated with the relations with children and parents (almost every other respondent selected these options). The least positively evaluated were teacher knowledge and skills concerning the subjects taught by them (only nearly every third respondent selected this option).

Among all the options, the parents most often (50% of responses and more) said that the teachers of their children:

- are always available when needed and easy to contact with (74.29% of all responses);

– have extensive knowledge about what they teach (62.86% of all responses);
– see the child's strengths and interests (55.71% of all responses);
– can organize team work (54.29% of all responses);
– with their patience, can make every child willing to work in the classroom (52.86% of all responses);
– evaluate children fairly and do not have favor particular children (50% of all responses)
– consult parents before making decision and really listen to them (51.43% of all responses).

The least frequently chosen options about teachers were:
– explain to the pupils the theme and goals of a lesson at the beginning of the lesson (17.14% of all responses);
– broaden and update their knowledge (18.57% of all responses).

It should be noted that the respondent parents observe many positive traits in the teachers working with their children. This shows that the teaching personnel in inclusive schools is appreciated. Each respondent selected a few options that presented the assets of teachers.

The respondents could also select no more than 5 traits that they consider to be the most important for teachers working in inclusion classrooms. According to the respondents, the most important are options in the "psychological and pedagogical knowledge and skills" category (nearly every third parent selected this option). The least important, in their opinion, were the options in the: "knowledge and skills concerning the teaching subject and content" and "knowledge and skills associated with the organization of teaching – methods, forms, means" categories.

The most important elements of the work of teachers, regardless of the category, were:
– easy contact with the teacher (54.29% of all responses),
– noticing the child's strengths and interests (44.29% of all responses),
– fair evaluation and not favoring any specific pupils in a special way (of all responses),

Table 5. The most important elements of teacher work in inclusion classrooms in the opinion of parents

Teacher in the school that the child attends:	Total	
	Σ	%
Knowledge and skills concerning the teaching subject and content		
Has extensive knowledge about the subject he or she teaches	28	40.00
Updates his or her knowledge	13	18.57
Apply methods that help remember the most important information	9	12.86
Present the topic at the beginning of a lesson	1	1.43
TOTAL	51	18.21
Knowledge and skills associated with the organization of teaching – methods, forms, means		
Present examples of the topics discussed	10	14.29
Organize team work	18	25.71
Use relevant aids	16	22.86
Give relevant homework	9	12.86
TOTAL	53	18.93
Teaching and psychological knowledge and skills		
Sees the child's strengths	31	44.29
Is patient	30	42.86
Includes all pupils in the life of the classroom and school	13	18.57
Talks to pupils	14	20.00
TOTAL	88	31.43
Teacher traits		
Gives fair grades	30	42.86
Copes well with stressful situations	10	14.29
Can cooperate with others	10	14.29
Is a good organizer	16	22.86
TOTAL	66	23.57
Skills associated with managing cooperation with parents		
Is easy to contact	38	54.29
Consults parents before making a decision	18	25.71
Uses forms of work that stimulate parent integration	7	10.00
Explains the plans and goals of work in a classroom	16	22.86
TOTAL	79	28.21

Source: own elaboration

– patience (42.86% of all responses),
– extensive knowledge about what the teacher teaches to children (40% of all responses).

According to the respondents, the least important element was presentation of the topic and goals at the beginning of a lesson. This response was only selected by one person (1.43%).

An individualized approach to a child is currently required in all educational institutions. It is considered important to tailor the requirements to the abilities of a child and to accommodate teaching aids and develop and improve the spheres that may not function properly in a child. It is becoming a necessity to accommodate the school environment to the specific needs of pupils. This way, their full development is enabled. Individualization should concern both children who have problems assimilating the curriculum by means of traditional educational methods, forms and means, as well as gifted children. In the latter case, it is necessary in order to avoid the syndrome of underperformance in school.

Integration schools are founded on the assumption of individualized approach to every child. Assistant teachers, fewer pupils in classrooms and professionals employed by the school are supposed to enable full implementation of this assumption.

Teachers evaluated the level of individualization of requirements in a three-grade scale. The following elements applied by teachers were taken into consideration:
– making tasks less difficult, to suit the child's abilities,
– having the child do only a part of a task,
– applying different evaluation criteria,
– giving more time for a child to do a task,
– using aids to help children with disabilities to understand the topic being presented,
– presenting information in a way that is tailored to the individual abilities and needs of the child,
– using work methods specific for children with disabilities,
– organizing group work,
– including all children in various activities,

– noticing and appreciating the efforts of pupils,
– motivating and encouraging children to work.

Based on the overall assessment of the above aspects, three degrees of the accommodation of requirements were identified: low, average and high.

Table 6. Degree of accommodation of requirements to suit the abilities of a pupil in the opinion of parents

Degree of accommodation of requirements to suit the abilities of a pupil	Total	
	Σ	%
Low	13	18.57
Average	48	68.57
High	9	12.86
TOTAL	70	100.00

Source: own elaboration

Table 6. shows that most respondents (more than two thirds) think that the degree of accommodations is average. More or less every fifth respondent thinks it to be low, and one in ten – high. This means that, according to parents, individualization at schools is not sufficient.

According to parents, noticing and appreciating pupils' efforts and motivating them (more or less one in two respondents selected these options) are those elements of individualization that are fulfilled to the highest degree. The options that were selected the least often were: making a child do only a part of a task and applying different evaluation criteria (more than 14%, respectively, in both cases).

The relations in the classroom and at school are important in education. B. Jachimczak and I. Chrzanowska suggest that in a classroom where there are children with different levels of ability, there is competition that makes cooperation between children more difficult. Pupils constantly compare themselves to their peers,

which results in fear of failure and negative behavior towards the weaker ones. I. Chrzanowska, performing a research on the quality and effectiveness of teaching children with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools, highlights the unwillingness of teachers to accept the idea of inclusive education[30]. One could wonder whether teachers in inclusion classrooms have the same attitude, especially subject teachers and early education teachers, who are often not trained to work with children who have special educational needs.

Table 7. High level of individualization of what is required of a child in the opinion of parents in the respective aspects

Full individualization of requirements with respect to:	Total	
	Σ	%
Lowering the level of tasks	20	28.57
Selection of tasks to be completed	10	14.29
Different evaluation criteria	10	14.29
More time to do the work	23	32.86
Teaching aids	22	31.43
Presenting information in different ways	25	35.71
Methods adapted to a child with disabilities	20	28.57
Learning through group work	25	35.71
Including all pupils	27	38.57
Noticing and appreciating the efforts of pupils	35	50.00
Motivating	36	51.43

Source: own elaboration

The opinion of parents in this respect was analyzed on the basis of descriptions of classroom situations. The parents opinions were supposed to reflect the school reality. They were asked about the relations between:

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[30] I. Chrzanowska, *Zaniedbane obszary edukacji – pomiędzy pedagogiką a pedagogiką specjalną. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls", Kraków 2009, p. 269-270.

– between pupils themselves,
– pupils and teachers,
– teachers.

Each of the possible responses (in the form of a cafeteria-style list) was associated with a specific relationship between the respective groups. The relations between teachers were: cooperation, competition, conflict and domination of one party. The relations between pupils were: cooperation, competition, conflict and domination of one group of pupils, domination of abled children. The relations between teachers were: cooperation, competition, conflict and domination of the teacher.

Table 8. Relations in the classroom in the opinion of parents

Relations in the classroom	Total	
	Σ	%
Between teachers		
Cooperation	66	94.29
Competition	8	11.43
Conflict	6	8.57
Domination of one party	22	31.43
Between pupils		
Cooperation	66	94.29
Competition	6	8.57
Conflict	5	7.14
Domination of one group of pupils	5	7.14
Domination of abled children	6	8.57
Between pupils and teachers		
Cooperation	62	94.29
Competition	4	5.71
Conflict	0	0.00
Domination of the teacher	8	11.43

Source: own elaboration

According to the respondents, teachers cooperate with one another (more than 94% of all responses), but also nearly one in three parents notes that some teachers dominate over others. It is particularly disadvantageous in an inclusion classroom, where there is an additional teacher assistant. If the main teacher dominates and there is no cooperation between the educators, the effect on the work in the classroom and on the development of pupils is negative. The results are in line with teacher declarations collected by Gajdzica, according to which only 5.1% of early education teachers and 6.8% of special needs educators indicated that difficult cooperation was a major factor causing difficult situations[31].

The relations between pupils, according to parents, are those of cooperation (more than 94% of all responses). This aspect, however, requires explanation, as it concerns work in the classroom, i.e. situations created by the teacher. Parents' evaluation would probably be different concerning behavior during breaks, or outside the school. The positive opinion may also be due to the fact that the number of parents of abled children is higher than of children with deficits. The relations between pupils and teachers were also evaluated as positive (cooperation was selected by as many as 94.29% respondents).

Pro-inclusion efforts are undertaken at Polish schools. A lot has already been done in this field (e.g. increasing focus on removing architectural barriers from public buildings). I think, however, that there still are many challenges ahead of us – such as developing a support network and building partnership for education in the broad meaning of the term, which requires parent involvement and teacher training.

I. Chrzanowska suggests that, despite the level of ability, every child needs the same: "a comprehensively educated, competent teacher, professionals working with the teacher and the pupil, school equipped with modern teaching aids, researchers who will

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[31] Z. Gajdzica, op. cit., p. 182.

contribute to developing better solutions for education"[32]. Let us hope that such education will one day be commonly available to all.

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[32] I. Chrzanowska, op. cit., p. 303.

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