

# Parteneriate intervenționale în educația copiilor cu cerințe speciale

## [Interventional Partnerships in the Education of Children with Special Needs]

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**Abstract.** *Special educative needs are described in the context of the need of “education for all in the school for all” and in the context of the realization of an instructive educative process governed by respect of the principles: non-discrimination and equality of chances for all the educables, and uniqueness and dignity of every person. The social reality demonstrates the fact that one can identify discriminate in opinions in relation to the integration in the mass education of the children with special educative needs, who, more often than not, are considered “uncomfortable” and with no clear perspectives of socio-professional integration. The stigmatization and rejection of such children is somewhat justified in the context on the value-related insistence in the education of the masses on man, on the sense of his becoming – “Man is not man, but becomes a man” (J. P. Sartre), namely respect for all persons. The discourse on an inclusive school preoccupies the educational act ants on a national and international level. They are trying to identify “good practices” on the level of the national and international social policies able to support the persons in difficulty towards autonomy, social integration and social inclusion. The integration of the children with disabilities in mass education represents the major desideratum of the inclusive educational policies in the context of there cognition of an equality of chances for all. The present paper aims to describe the structure of the interventional partnerships in the education of children with special educative needs and their place and role on the level of the inclusive school in Romania.*

**Keywords:** special educative demands, inclusion, education, personalized plan, social care

### **Inclusive education in the postmodern society**

Inclusive education represents a desideratum of the education of the postmodern society in relation to which a series of special measures have been designed and implemented, focused mainly on the universal access of all the children to the educational services. In this framework, education is realized under the conditions of respect for the principles of: non-discrimination and equality of chances, universality, dignity and uniqueness of the person. Examining the social domain on the level of the common sense one can note the existence of social behaviours based on stereotypes and value judgements, discriminating attitudes that are very detrimental to human dignity. Consequently, one can feel the need of a change of paradigm regarding the way the persons with special needs are perceived and the importance of reactivating the specialized services supporting the social integration of all the categories of persons, regardless of their biological, economic, social, cultural, educational status. Thus, a discussion has been opened out of the need to reconsider the

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explanations related to “abnormality” and “defect” and “value and dignity of the person”. The debates on the need to realize an education for the persons with special needs emerge in Great Britain (1978) when the Warnock Report (the basic document for special education) opened a discussion regarding the fact that “there would be two type of children – the *normal* ones (integrated in the regular education) and those *with defficiencies* (integrated in the special education (apud Manea, 2006, 45). The same report concluded that for children with learning difficulties a supplementary support is needed to assure the shaping and development of the skills needed for their autonomy and social integration. Later on, the conclusions of this report have been disseminated in Europe and have been promoted especially by the UNESCO. In Romania, the academic debate on the measures for special educative needs emerges after 1993, when “*special education is designed in the scene of the educational needs complementary to the general objectives of school education, and calls for a scholarization adapted to the individual particularities and /or the particularities characteristic of a learning disability or disorder, and for a specific intervention, by an adequate rehabilitation/ recovery and compensation*” (Vrăsmaș, Vrăsmaș, 1993). This was actually the basis of the explanations on “inclusive education” in Romania, which includes the education of children with special educative needs both in mass education and in special education. Actually, the equality of chances, the universal access to educational services, social and school participation calls for special attention in the case of the children who, out of different reasons, need supplementary support, specific, positive socio-educational assistance, based on turning to good value the person and compensating the disadvantages identified on the personal level of their development. For this, it is necessary to respect the principles of: equality, non-discrimination and universal access to educational and social services. “*The special educative demands involve the allotment of supplementary public and/or private resources assured to support education, if these resources are assured when the students have “certain difficulties of access to the ordinary curriculum”*” (OECD, apud Vrăsmaș, 2011, 21). Social solidarity becomes, therefore, a predictor of social inclusion for all the categories of persons.

The operational framework of the special educative needs considers the following aspects: risk situation, difficulty, social disadvantage/ under privilege, disability, marginalization, vulnerability. On this background, the need for a specialized intervention in education is brought into focus, namely that supplementary support given to all the people identified with special needs by: reconsidering the modalities of implementation of the instructive educative process, adapting the school curriculum, designing a special curriculum, implementing specialized intervention plans allowing modeling all categories of educables. Education is meant for everyone. In the postmodern society, frequent discussions take place about the need of a permanent education and about the access to educational services when never necessary. The special educative needs take into account the need for plurisectorial interventional partnership and for the presence of multidisciplinary teams to support the persons in need or difficulty. In the category of children with special educative needs are included: children having a disability as a consequence of certain organic disorder/ disease (congenital or here dietary abnormalities, malformations), children diagnosed with learning problems (different types of dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, discalculia), which can settle in either on a direct causal background or associated to some somatic and psycho emotional problems. Other causes producing

difficulties of access to the educational services can be of economic, cultural social or linguistic origin (linguistic barriers, poverty, ethnic, religious, social discrimination).

### **Integration and school inclusion of the children with special educative needs**

Educational inclusion policies have focused on the measures, programs and institutions meant to help the children with special educative needs with their access and integration in school. In this framework, the schools have taken on different roles: facilitator of the promotion of the children's rights to education; educating and cultivating tolerance, solidarity and equality; promoting the rights of the children with disabilities; realizing an instructive educative process modeled according to the needs of each student. This aspect also comes as an answer to the measures imposed by the European Union in the sense of the development of inclusive educational practices by the "Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Education, concerning the integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education" (1990), with the following sets of provisions: integration in mass education of the children with special educative needs; continual training of the teaching staff for realizing desirable educational practices meant to support socio educational autonomy and development; permanent collaboration between special and mass schools in order to increase the efficiency of the educational process. This resolution has also been supported by UNICEF and promoted as well as a form of recognition of the right to education of all children. The concept of "social inclusion" is a broad concept, which, on the level of the common sense, accepts explanations of the type: inclusion, insertion, acceptance, recognition and valorization of the persons with disabilities or of the social groups they are part of. The psychologists have defined the social integration process as a dynamic process of objectivisation of the socialization results and of social learning. Integration means processing, assuming and actively exerting a system of social statuses and activities corresponding to the obligations and rights resulting from it" (Cristea, 1998, 108). The social integration process, respectively school integration develops in the context of the equality of chances and rights for all the persons. In this framework, the aim is that of seeing the positive side of every person and of accepting diversity. The mechanism of the school integration process for children with special educative needs is described based on models in which the parties involved in the care and protection of these children realize specific activities. School integration can be understood as well by means of the social interactions and the solidarity of the parties involved in the services plan. The social integration process for children with special educative needs integrates the aspects related to "school inclusion" namely the integration of the child with special educative needs in mass or special education by the full recognition of his rights and freedoms. The legislation in Romania operates with the concept of "inclusion", which it defines as follows:

"The social inclusion process represents the set of multidimensional measures and actions in the domain of social protection, employment, dwelling, education, health, information-communication, mobility, security, justice and culture, meant to fight social exclusion and assure an active participation of the persons to all the economic, social, cultural and political aspects of the society. (according to art. 6 letter c) in Law no. 292/2011/ Social Care Law, Romania)"

In Europe, different practices have been identified concerning special education. Thus, in Norway, the right to *special education* goes to the students who do not participate or cannot satisfactorily benefit of the teaching activity available in mass education. The structure of the courses offered must be realized so as to bring adequate benefits by comparison with the other students and for educational objectives realistic for them. The

students receiving special education have the same total number of teaching classes as the other students. In England, children with special educational needs are considered those children with learning difficulties who need to be provided with special education. It is considered a learning difficulty when: they have a severe or significant learning difficulty, compared to the majority of the children of the same age or have a disability preventing them from benefiting of the educational facilities offered by school for same-age children. A child has a “learning difficulty” if he has a significantly greater difficulty in the learning process than most same-age children or is faced with difficulties hindering him from facing the general curriculum foreseen for his age. Switzerland also pleads for an inclusive school –namely school for all. Actually, children and young men under 20 living in Switzerland have the right to special education conditions: previously to the obligatory education, if one can establish that the development of the child is limited or there is a risk of hindered development in the future and if the demands in the general school are hard to attain by the child without supplementary support or during the obligatory education when it has been established that the development and educational perspectives are limited and special educational support is needed. In Sweden, no definition has been designed for the syntagm “special educative needs”. So, education is based on the principle “school for all” and is focused on access to education for all. This means that students who need special support shall not be dealt with differently compared to the other students and their rights shall not be specified separately. It is the obligation of the school to discover the students’ needs. Poland also offers a conceptualization of inclusive school. Thus, the education for children with special needs refers to children and young people with development disabilities. Estonia is a country appreciating the special educational need also from the perspective of intellectual giftedness or performances by comparison with the child’s biological age. Thus, students with special educative needs are: students with remarkable talent, students with learning or behavioral difficulties or with health problems.

The education for people with special educational needs takes into account the respect of the principle *equal education opportunities for all*.

“The child is the spiritual builder of mankind, and the obstacles in the way of his free development are stones in the wall imprisoning man’s soul.” (Maria Montessori)

The inclusion of the children with special educative needs is the object of specialized intervention. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ratified by Romania in 1990, in article 23(1), it is mentioned:

“A child with physical or psychic disabilities must be assured a full and decent life in conditions guaranteeing his dignity, promoting his autonomy and facilitating the child’s active participation in the community”. In the Salamanca Declaration (2001), it is mentioned that “any child has the fundamental right to education and special educational needs come from the presence of disabilities or learning difficulties”.

Social integration is an active process which in the case of children with special educative needs are objectivized in: full participation, assuming social roles and responsibilities in agreement with one’s own performance, social interaction, development of the feeling of belonging, of the trust in oneself and in the others. The stages of social integration for children with special educative needs are realized in the conditions of the meeting of some physical, social, emotional, health, economic, cultural needs. In this case, the approach of the social integration problems is realized from a multidimensional and plurisectorial perspective. It is appreciated that in this framework of social and school

integration, specialists of various domains are needed, depending on the need identified. The approach of the case acquires this time a holistic perspective, many of those trained in the care process integrating recovery and intervention models according to the stadial, progressive model. It has been appreciated that the first stage of integration is that of physical integration, when a child with special educative needs has to be enrolled in a normal or special school depending on the invalidity degree and the initial anticipatory evaluations made by the specialist, regarding the success rate of the educational model designed. During this stage, for the child with special educative needs, optimal conditions are created for the realization of an instructive educative process adapted to the child's psycho-behavioral particularities. Thus, it is appreciated that on the level of the mass education classes, the accent is put mainly on the teacher's role in the active participation to the process of adaptation of the students with special educative needs on the group level. The concept *special educative needs* is defined as "supplementary educational needs, complementary to the general objectives of education, adapted to the individual particularities and to the particularities of a certain defficiency/ disability or learning or other disorders/ difficulties and to a complex (medical, social, educational etc.) care". (Order 6552/2011).

In Romania, according to the statistical data provided by National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption (NACPA), in June 2016, the situation of the children with disabilities appears as follows (Table1):

**Table 1.** *Situation of the children with disabilities in Romania according to the disability degree*

Disability degree	Number of children
light	1683
moderate	18910
severe	15177
profound	36695
Total	<b>72465</b>

Source: NACPA, Romania, 2016

Most of the children identified with disabilities are situated in the segment of the children with severe and profound disability (about two thirds – 51,872 cases) for whom the special educational interventions impose packages of measures to be implemented on the level of the special school or hospital or recovery hostels. The other part is situated in the segment of the children with light and moderate disability (20,593) being helped by specialized educational interventions on the level of mass education. For them, the nurseries, kindergartens and schools that are part of the mass education represent the institutions implementing inclusive education programs.

The distribution of the children on age groups (Table 2) appears as follows:

**Table 2.** *Distribution of the children with disabilities on age groups*

Disability category	Age category			
	0-2 y.o.	3 – 6 y.o.	7 – 13 y.o.	14 – 17 y.o.
light	512	243	540	388
moderate	4012	3555	7071	4272
severe	1313	2658	6853	4353
profound	3421	8938	16103	8233
<b>TOTAL</b>	9258	15394	30567	17246
	<b>72465</b>			

Source: NAPCA, Romania, 2016

The lowest number of children can be found in the age segment 0-2 years old compared to the segment 7-13 years old, which imposes the supplementing of the specialists meant to intervene from an interdisciplinary perspective in the set of problems related to special educative needs. There are many situations in which these “special” children are subjected to tagging processes, marginalization and social exclusion. In these situations, the teachers have the duty to model the other people’s behaviours in the sense of tolerance, equality, accepting and valuing the person and realizing an instructive educative process meeting the needs of all the educables. The strategies adopted on the level of the socio educational group are multiple: from physical ones, like the adaptation of the classroom area or of other areas used for learning, to educational and didactic ones, which concern the aspects related to the particularization of the curriculum, its modification and adaptation to the level of the capacities of each child, the elaboration of progress and school performance descriptors in harmony with the specific of the special needs. The educational activities are realized after having designed the education aims clearly. The curricular adaptation is realized taking into account: the recommendations of the psycho pedagogical care service, the individualized individual plan, the national curriculum and the methodological guide concerning the curricular adaptations and the school progress evaluation in the context of inclusive education. Individualizing the training is a student-centered teaching approach, taking into account the child’s learning particularities. For children with special educative needs, one considers the dimension of differentiated education aimed at the processes adapting the training to the psycho-behavioral, emotional and intellectual peculiarities specific of one or several children. The stage preceding the instructive educative process is related to the clarification by the teacher of the aspects being the object of the special needs. In this framework, it takes the collaboration with specialists from other activity sectors empowered to clarify all the aspects being the object of special requirements (needs, risks, possibilities and results). These specialists are mainly: support teachers, social care workers, psychologists, specialized doctors.

### **The pluridisciplinary team – structure, responsibilities, roles**

Special education is defined in the context of the adaptation of the education process and of the interventions specific for the particularities of each student. This education addresses children and persons who do not manage, in the frame of the ordinary general education, to normally reach the educative and social levels corresponding to their age. In Romania, on the level of each county, there is a Center of Educational Resources and Care with responsibilities in the sense of facilitating the access to educational services for children with special needs. The services offered at this center are: evaluation, psycho educational care, school and professional guidance for children, students and young people with special educational needs. After the evaluation process, a series of improvement-formative measures are proposed, and the types of educational services answering the needs of shaping and developing the skills needed for personal autonomy, social and professional integration are identified and established. The evaluation made by the School and Professional Evaluation and Guidance Service (*Serviciul de Evaluare și Orientare Școlară și Profesională*) are realized in an interdisciplinary context, by mixed teams made up of teachers with training in the domain of pedagogy, special psycho pedagogy, a social care worker and a specialized doctor who have distinct responsibilities. The activity of the teachers in this commission is materialized in: diagnosis, evaluation and intervention on the case from a psycho educational perspective (observation and psychological evaluation necessary to establish the development level of the psychic function and processes by specific measures, network collaboration with other specialists: language therapists, school counselors, itinerant teachers, the family of the child with special educative needs, school mediators).

The social care worker realizes activities of initial evaluation and specialized intervention, case monitoring and network collaboration with other specialists who can offer support in the sense of facilitating the access to educational services and support throughout the educational program. The role of the social care worker is very important in the stage of initial evaluation of the case, when, after the social surveys, one identifies the social needs and problems the assisted person is faced with and priorities are established in harmony with the need for intervention and the individualized services plan meant to answer the beneficiary's objectives of educational and social integration is drafted. The stage of initial evaluation permits to explore the case as well from the perspective of the identification of the resources necessary for the specialized intervention. In the initial stage, the investigations made by the social care worker, at the beneficiary's home or in the environment where he lives are concentrated on the following aspects: type and structure of the child's family, relations in the family, parents' attitude in relation to the education of the child, revenue or financial resources of the family, conditions of life from the perspective of the conditions of living, relation with the members of the family, degree of independence/ dependence on adults or other means permitting the child's functioning. These elements of the social survey framework are essential in establishing the needs and priorities as to the conditions required in the special education process. Special education in a formal framework cannot be supported except in conditions of active multidisciplinary partnerships. Important is also the role of the family in supporting, engaging and sustaining the children with special educative needs for school participation. The following sets of responsibilities are the object of the activities of the social care worker of the Social and Professional Evaluation and Guidance Service: initial evaluation of the case, drafting of the

personalized intervention plan, collaboration with the family and other specialists involved in the intervention and case monitoring process (school counselors, school mediators, itinerant teachers, support teachers) in order to fight and prevent the problems that can hinder the educational trajectory. The children identified with special educative needs benefit of a series of support measures meant to encourage school participation. Thus, each child integrated in mass educational units, beside counseling and guidance, medical, psychological and educational services, benefits of: daily meals allowance, school writing materials, clothes and footwear at equality with those assured for children in the child protection system. At the same time, children with special educative needs can benefit of free boarding in hostels or assistance centers for children that are part of central social institutions. The specialist doctor realizes an activity of diagnosis, evaluation, monitoring and control of the beneficiary's health state in the context of a final diagnosis. Most often, children with special educative needs are faced with problems related to tagging and negative discrimination. The social reality often proves that in mass education, not all teachers agree with the integration of the children with special educative needs in the normal classes. In an interview realized with primary and secondary school teachers concerning the place of special education for special children, most of them consider that education for these children is not high-quality because a series of factors are disturbing the instructive educative process. Out of the factors mentioned, we shall remind of: the imperfect management of the training methods, the improper distribution of the time available, teacher's exhaustion, resistance of the students and their parents to the integration in class of the children with special educative needs, precarious professional skills in the management of crisis situations. At the same time, they consider that the hardest to manage are the cases of children with ADHD. For each case identified with special educative needs, to make the interventions more efficient, in the educational practice, the Individualized Educational Plan is the basic instrument the specialists actively participating in the education of the persons with special educative needs should operate with. This Plan is described in the context of the realization of planned actions allowing the organization of the educational process according to the each student's capacities. The individualized educational plan permits a planning and an organization of the instructive educative process for each curricular area and school discipline, allowing to design and to describe the educational interventions. At the same time, it is a helping tool for a teacher educating a child with special educative needs (Vrășmas, 2004, 176-177). An educational intervention plan can be designed taking into account the following aspects (Table 3).

**Table 3.** *Interventional strategy*

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Work tools</b>	<b>People in charge</b>
Initial evaluation	observations, psychological tests, school tests, social surveys, interviews, school results analysis	Social care worker, psychologist, teachers of each discipline, educational psychologist, pedagogue.
Diagnosis/ prescriptive diagnosis (identifying and evaluating needs)	Social survey reports, case study, school results evaluation, medical documents evaluation	Social care worker, psychologist, teachers of each discipline, educational psychologist, school counselor, specialist doctor/ pediatricist.
Anticipation of the results of the specialized intervention/	Conclusions of the survey reports and multidimensional	Social care worker, psychologist, teachers of each

Forecast	evaluations (capacity of adaptation and social integration, evaluation of the psychic and intellectual functions and processes, self-control, language motility, somatic capacity)	discipline, educational psychologist, school counselor, specialist doctor, pediatricist
Objectives determination and intervention planning	Problem-hierarchization grids; determination of priorities; determination of the main objectives on curricular areas	Social care worker, psychologist, teachers of each discipline, educational psychologist, school counselor, people in charge of methodological commissions
Identification of the human, material, time resources and determination of the responsibilities for each specialist	Determination of the composition of the interdisciplinary team, access to the benefit of social care, estimation of the time fund needed to develop each activity and planning, specifying the fund of material resources necessary for a high-quality education.	Social care worker, psychologist, teachers of each discipline, educational psychologist, school counselor
Implementing the action plan	Realizing the educative activities in integrated system and focused on the beneficiaries' needs (individualized training strategies, designing the adapted, modified curriculum)	teachers of each discipline, support teacher, itinerant teacher, school counselor, family, class of students, psychologist, educational psychologist.
Result evaluation	School and social progress measurement grids	teachers of each discipline, support teacher, itinerant teacher, school counselor, family, class of students, psychologist, educational psychologist.
Monitoring	Interviews with parents, measuring the perception regarding the beneficiaries' satisfaction in relation with the measures undertaken, measuring school success, evaluating the degree of social inclusion	teachers of each discipline, support teacher, itinerant teacher, school counselor, family, class of students, psychologist, educational psychologist, social care worker.

Source:

The success of the individualized educational plan is recorded in the context of the attainment of a relation of trust with the beneficiary. This aspect is particularly important because it naturally triggers the active participation of the beneficiaries in the instructive educative process, and if he declares himself a partner, the rate of success of the specialized intervention is high.

## Conclusions

These perspectives explaining the education for people with special educational needs take into account the respect of the principle of equality of chances to education for all. Inclusive school is the school where education is developed in the context of the realization of an instructive educative process using didactic-material resources according to the potential of each student and leading to obtaining school success. Education can only be assured if a pluridisciplinary intervention model, which will call for the simultaneous intervention of the itinerant teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, social care workers, doctors and special counselors and psycho-pedagogues, is contemplated. The adoption of a personalized plan of services, established in harmony with the needs of each educable, can successfully contribute to each person's progress.

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