

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IMPLEMENTED IN THE FORM OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES**

CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The aim of inclusive education is to adapt educational requirements, educational organization and learning conditions to the needs and capabilities of each pupil in a multifaceted way. Inclusive education is implemented by the educational systems of the European Union Member States. In Poland its history began in the 1990s. Many activities are currently being undertaken to create the best possible conditions for the development of the potential of each pupil. The school environment in cooperation with the family is responsible for taking all possible measures to eliminate barriers which prevent the child from being given proper education. In particular, this task is related to the care for a child with disabilities.

In the Polish educational system, there are many forms of implementing the postulate of inclusive education. It is worth emphasizing the activity of day-care centres which provide extra-curricular education for children. The school day-care centre is a place where inclusive education is a daily practice. The article presents a case study of the activity of a day-care centre in one of the schools with inclusive classes in Krakow. The description of the day-care centre functioning made it possible to present the diversity of activities undertaken in it. The data was extended by referring to the opinions of parents and children.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusion, day-care centre, extra-curricular activities

Discipline: pedagogy

Absztrakt

INKLUZÍV OKTATÁS TANÓRÁN KÍVÜLI TEVÉKENYSÉGEKBE ÁGYAZVA. ESETTANULMÁNY

Az inkluzív oktatás célja, hogy az oktatási elvárások, az oktatási szervezet és a tanulási feltételek sokoldalúan igazodjanak minden egyes diák igényeihez és képességeihez. Az Európai Unió tagállamiban az inkluzív oktatás az oktatási rendszerek szerves része. Lengyelország az 1990-es években kapcsolódott be a folyamatba. Jelenleg számos módszerrel igyekeznek a lehető legjobb fejlesztési lehetőségeket biztosítani minden egyes diák számára. Az iskolai környezet a családdal együttműködve felelős azért, hogy a gyermek megkapja a számára megfelelő oktatást. A megfelelő fejlesztés biztosítása különös jelentőségű a fogyatékkal élő gyermekek esetén. A lengyel oktatási rendszer számos lehetőséget biztosít az inkluzív oktatás alkalmazására. Fontos hangsúlyozni az iskolai napközik azon tevékenységét, amelyek délutáni nevelést biztosítanak a gyermekek számára. Az iskolai napközi az a hely, ahol az inkluzív nevelés napi gyakorlat. A tanulmány egy krakkói, inkluzív oktatást folytató iskola napközi tevékenységét mutatja be. A napközi otthon lehetővé tette, hogy bemutassuk az ott folyó változatos tevékenységeket. Az adatgyűjtés során a szülők és a gyermekek véleményét is kikértük.

Kulcsszavak: inkluzív nevelés, inklúzió, napközi, tanórán kívüli tevékenységek

Diszciplina: pedagógia

Introduction

Inclusive education as a development within systemic changes is implemented in countries where a vast majority of children have access to education, but the extent of the access is not equal due to developmental disorders or disability (Chrzanowska, 2018). The main goal of inclusive education is to provide such pupils with equal opportunities to gain education and integrate them at all levels of education (The Polish Ombudsman, 2012).

The idea of inclusive education has been implemented in Poland for several years, which allows for an assessment of the current level of educational inclusion. The many areas of its implementation include day-care centres where extra-curricular activities are provided for pupils with both standard and special developmental and educational needs.

The description and assessment of the activity of a day-care centre in one of the primary schools in Krakow (Poland) will throw some light on the specificity of inclusive education and enable indicating the directions of its further development.

Inclusive education in Poland

Inclusive education in Poland is the result of many years of experiments and reflection on education of children who have individual developmental and educational needs. It can be maintained that the system of special education in Poland currently covers three main areas, i.e. segregation, integration and inclusion. Their common feature is the demand for equality of all pupils before the law and equal opportunities to choose an individual path of education (Szpak, 2017). The differences

concern the ways of achieving the educational goals. The segregation system assumes a selection due to disability and education in special schools. The departure from these standards led to the development and implementation of inclusive education, which made it possible for a child with a disability to participate in school life; the focus, however, was still on their deficits. It was only in 2014 that changes were made to the education system in Poland, which allowed to adopt and implement the idea of inclusive education (Szpak, 2017). It is significant that in subsequent years, the term *'special educational needs'* started to be replaced by the term *'individual developmental and educational needs'* in legislation (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9th August 2017), which is evidence of the positive changes taking place in Polish education. The understanding of inclusive education is closely linked to the definition presented by the UNESCO:

“Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2019).

The above definition highlights all relevant assumptions and areas of education of pupils with special educational needs. Moreover, unlike segregated and integrative education, the definition assumes that integration will take place in a completely different way: “Rather than being a marginal issue on how some learners can be integrated in mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners” (UNESCO, 2019).

An important assumption of this education is that a child with a disability should be able to participate in education at the institution closest to their place of residence (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9th August 2017), which contributes to social inclusion of their family. Does the acceptance of these assumptions mean that every Polish school will create suitable conditions for education of all learners? This question is largely rhetorical since the success of inclusive education depends on a large extent on the attitudes of the people responsible for education (headmasters, teachers and other staff) and those who participate in education as pupils or their parents (Szczepkowska, 2019). Thus, an illustrative analysis of this environment is justified.

The school environment and its inclusive activities

The activities of the school environment aimed at implementing inclusive education are carried out along two lines. The first line involves taking formal actions as defined by the education law. The second way is to try to change the perception of disability and integration by those involved in education. It is estimated that approx. 30% of pupils in Polish schools are currently those with special educational needs, with even 40% in preschools (Łaska, 2019). Thus, in each school there are pupils who require an individual approach and adaptation of the educational process to their developmental and educational needs as well as psychophysical abilities. This poses a major challenge to the school environment, which is matched by measures taken to sensitise pupils to the needs of others. In order for the objectives of inclusive education to be achieved, all pupils, regardless of their own abilities, must learn this and identify with such an idea (Bednarz, 2015). Pupils should be supported within their family environment and by teachers, who should have the following skills if they work with

children with varied developmental and educational needs and psychophysical abilities:

- to recognize the needs and abilities of children and act in accordance with that recognition;
- to use methods and forms of work that are effective in teaching children and their learning;
- to grade pupils;
- to collaborate with their pupils' parents;
- to collaborate with other teachers;
- to solve problems and take advantage of the support from educational institutions;
- to include, on a continuous basis, issues concerning values, interpersonal communication, prevention and patriotism in the educational process (Łaska, 2019).

The skills listed above are not fundamentally different from what is expected of any teacher, whether they work with pupils with standard or special developmental and educational needs. However, with regard to the objectives of inclusive education, these skills take on added importance as they enable the integration of actors in the education system. Inclusive education in preschools and schools can be pursued taking using various forms of classroom, extra-curricular and out-of-school activities. Worthy of notice are extra-curricular activities that take place at school, most commonly at the day-care centre.

School day-care centre as a place of educational inclusion

The day-care centre plays a significant role in fulfilling the tasks related to care and education by the school. It is also an important form of assistance to the child and the family. It is an example of an intra-school care and education facility that supports and complements the work of the school in all the

aspects of care, education and teaching as well as in the preventive and therapeutic impacts (Pery, Kmita, 2014). The amendment to the Act on the Education System of 2014 introduced the necessity to provide day-care activities for primary school pupils and to enable schools providing special education to organise such activities. The main underlying reason was the difficulties related to the parents' long working hours and consequently to transport to and from school. The number of pupils in a day-care centre under the care of one teacher was limited to 25; however, at mainstream schools the number of pupils under the care of one teacher corresponds to the number of pupils required for a special class to be formed (Act of 24th April 2014 amending the Act on the education system). Day-care centres in primary and special education schools provide day-care activities "taking into account the educational and developmental needs of children and adolescents, as well as their psychophysical and physical abilities, in particular activities that help to develop pupils' interests, activities that ensure their proper physical development and help pupils with their homework" (Act of 24th April 2014 amending the Act on the education system).

In order to implement the above requirements, the school headmaster should have a day-care room prepared and equipped according to the needs and constraints of all the children including pupils with disabilities. Schools where there is a need for it may, with the approval of the relevant body, employ educators specialising in particular areas, such as deaf education, education of people with intellectual disabilities or education of the blind. They can also use the help of psychologists, speech therapists or other therapists.

The headmaster may allocate tasks to teachers who support children with individual developmental and educational needs or to teacher assistants in such manner that some of their tasks are related to supporting children during their stay at the day-

care centre. The school headmaster has the right to take on volunteers to help at the day-care centre under a relevant agreement (Szczepkowska, 2019).

The implementation of the changes enabling the pursuit of inclusive education at school day-care centres was evaluated by the Supreme Audit Office in 2017. As a result, it was found that the care functions were performed correctly at the day-care centres in most of the schools that were inspected. Some shortcomings, however, were found; they were mainly due to the fact that “ significant proportion of the pupils enrolled at the day-care centres were not provided with the opportunity to participate in activities which would take into account their identified individual interests and educational needs, the implementation of which would promote each pupil’s psychophysical”(Supreme Audit Office, 2014, 2017).

These briefly presented results of the evaluation of the functioning of school day-care centres in the perspective of inclusive education provide inspiration to make constructive changes in the organisation of the care and education activities provided at day-care centres. In order for such changes to bring about an improvement in the operation of day-care centres, it is necessary to carry out evaluations of the individual educational institution in this respect. This requirement defined the objective of the research carried out.

Own research

This research provides a case study of a day-care centre in one of the primary schools with inclusive classes in Krakow. The day-care centre serves regularly 75 pupils, mainly at the early education level. The school day-care centre is open from 7 am to 5 pm with a break when children have lessons (8.50 to 11.20). Care is provided by 4 educators. They are joined by other teachers and also special educators if necessary.

During the morning activities (7 am to 8.50 am) children spend time relaxing with music, playing board games or preparing for lessons. During this time, the children work in one group. During the afternoon activities (11.20 am to 5 pm) pupils are divided into three age groups. For each day there is a schedule which includes time for free play, additional activities (e.g. dancing, art, music or reading activities), time for learning teamwork and home-work time.

The day-care centre is used by healthy and non-disabled children as well as those with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities, children with Asperger’s syndrome, autism spectrum disorder and motor disabilities. The purpose of the work done at the day-care centre is to include all members of the group to the activities before and after the lessons, to teach them respect for each person and the skill to work together with their peers.

The research carried out in November 2019 is the first stage of the evaluation of the activities at the day-care centre initiated by the school management. Further research is planned for June 2020. Parents and children attending the day-care centre were asked to fill in a questionnaire to evaluate the work of the day-care centre. For this purpose, questionnaires (different for children and parents) prepared by the teachers of the day-care centre and approved by the headmaster were used. The survey resulted in 22 questionnaires from first-form pupils and parents, 14 questionnaires from second-form pupils and parents, and 6 questionnaires from third-form pupils and parents, i.e. 42 questionnaires in total. Despite the relatively low response rate, the research material contains information that is worth analysing.

The parent questionnaire contained 7 questions. Respondents rated the functioning of the day-care centre on a scale of 1-5 where 1 represents the worst rating and 5 the best. The items evaluated comprised the division of the day-care centre into age groups, the level of satisfaction with the care

provided to children, the offer of additional activities and reliability of information provided by day-care centre teachers. The parents were also asked to indicate activities that were missing in their opinion and to list the strengths and weaknesses of the centre.

The pupil questionnaire contained 4 questions. Children responded in the presence of their parents and indicated whether or not they enjoyed spending time at the day-care centre, what they liked most and what they did not like at the day-care centre; they also indicated what they missed most. At the end, space was left for any suggestions from parents and children.

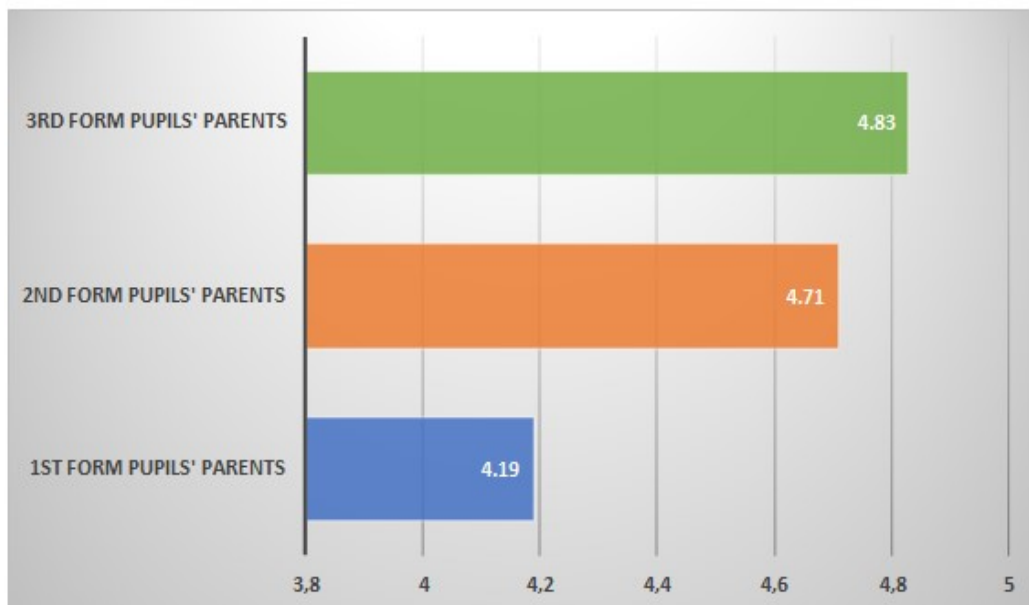
Analysis of results

The first analysis concerned the results of the survey conducted among the parents. The first question in the questionnaire was, *'How do you rate the division into age groups at the day-care centre?'* The parents were also asked to justify their statement. The parents' justifications were divided into groups of positive and negative opinions concerning the age division. The parents of first-form pupils pointed

out the positive aspects, such as building relationships with peers, easier integration, special care and the lack of discomfort due to the presence of older children, as well as one negative aspect, i.e. the lack of contact with older children. The parents of second-form pupils pointed to building relationships with the peers and less noise as the positive effects of dividing children into groups. They also mentioned the negative sides, i.e. the lack of integration with older children, the necessity to contact and help younger children and the sense of superiority among children from the second form. The parents of third-form pupils, in turn, indicated adjustment to their children's emotional and social development, similar interests and ease of establishing contacts as positive. On the other hand, they negatively assessed the organization of games and additional activities.

The question about the level of parents' satisfaction with their children's participation in the day-care centre activities allowed to obtain data which have been presented graphically in Figure 1. It presents the average ratings for each parent group (1-5).

Figure 1: Parents' level of satisfaction with care provided at the day-care centre. (By the Authors)



The presented results show that the parents of first-form pupils gave the lowest rating of care in the day-care centre (4.19) the parents of second-form pupils had much higher rating (4.71) and the parents of third-form pupils had the highest rating (4.83). The order of the ratings corresponds to duration of the parents' collaboration with the day-care centre. This means that the parents of third-form pupils have been working with the day-care centre for the longest time - the third year, and the parents of first-form pupils rate the day-care centre based on a period of about three months. As can be noticed, a closer familiarity with the functioning of the day-care centre increases the parents' rating. This may also be influenced by the fact that parents who have been working with the day-care centre team for a longer period are more familiar with their difficult working conditions and see their commitment.

The parents could also justify their assessment which 27 parents did. The comments included the following, the most common categories: involvement of staff, satisfaction with care, the opportunity to talk, and to communicate information about children's behaviour.

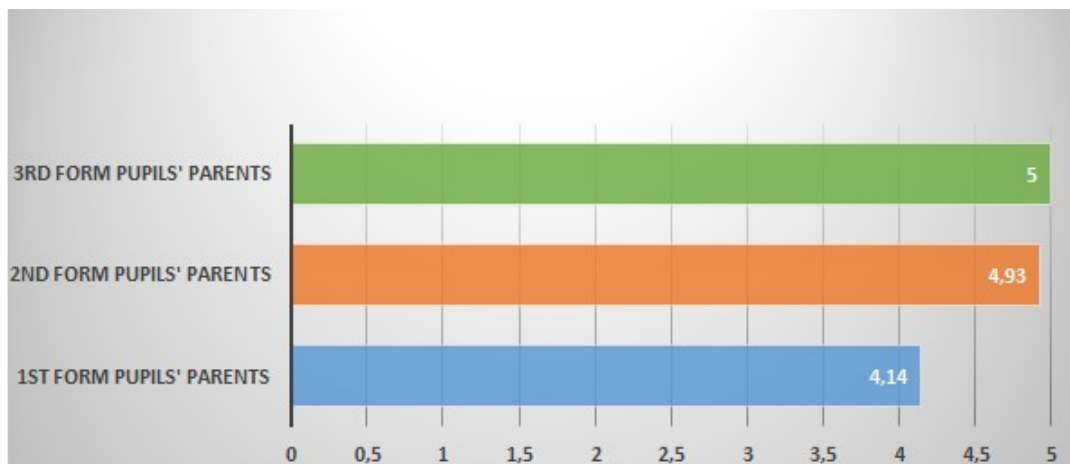
The next question parents answered was, '*Please assess the reliability of the feedback you get from the educators about your child (successes and difficulties)*'. The average ratings are shown in Figure 2.

The question about the reliability of the information provided by the teachers working in the day-care centre is related to the task of observing the pupils and passing on information and observations to parents. The results presented show that it is the parents of children in the third-form that give the highest ratings for the reliability of the feedback with the average being 5.

The parents of children in the second-form give an average rating of 4.93 while the parents of children in the first-form give a rating of 4.14. Thus, the responses correspond to those to the first question. It can be assumed that the assessment of the communication channel between teachers and parents is varied but relatively high.

This means that parents are convinced that they receive information about their children's behaviour, development and needs to a satisfactory extent.

Figure 2: Reliability of feedback in parents' opinion. (By the Authors)



The next two questions concerned the strengths and weaknesses concerning the work of the day-care centre. The parents were asked to provide a response in the form of an open statement. The most frequent responses have been presented in the Figure 3 below. The percentage results in Graph 3 and the following ones do not add up as the respondents could provide more than one statement.

The parents surveyed considered good time organisation to be the main strength of the day-care centre's work. As a strong point of the day-care centre's work 33.3% of parents of third-form pupils, 31.8% of parents of first-form pupils and 21.4% of parents of second-form pupils indicated it. Moreover, parents of children from the third-form also pointed out the stock of toys in the day-care centre. It is worth emphasizing the good orientation of parents in the areas of activities undertaken in the day-care centre.

It probably results from their cooperation with teachers working in the day-care centre and discussions with children about day-care activities.

Parents do not only notice the strengths of the day-care centre. The request to identify its weak-

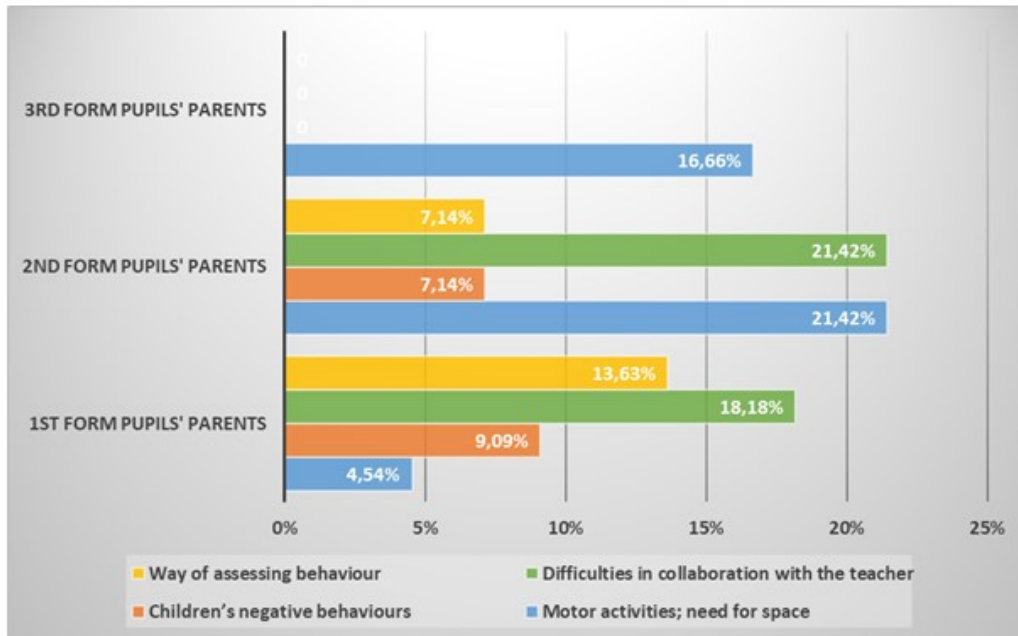
nesses allowed to obtain data which are presented in Figure 4.

The presented results show that parents see a shortage of sports activities or going outside the school building, as well as a need for more space for their children. Especially the parents of second-form pupils (21.42%) and third-form pupils (16.66%), while the parents of first grade pupils rarely mentioned physical activity as a weakness of the day-care centre (4.54%). Parents are aware that their children are developing and need more and more space to function comfortably. It can be presumed that children also show this need at home, which increases their parents' sensitivity in this respect. The parents of students from the first (13.63%) and second form (7.14%) also pointed to the negative impact of the fact and the way children's behaviour is assessed. There were also opinions indicating a difficulty in agreeing with the teacher of a given group - the highest percentage of parents of students from second-form (21.42%), followed by first-form (18.18%), while the parents of students from third-form did not mention the difficulty in agreeing with the teacher as a weakness of the day-care centre's work.

Figure 3: Strengths of the day-care centre in parents' opinion (By the Authors)



Figure 4: Weaknesses in the work of the day-care centre in parents' opinion (By the Authors)



Therefore, it seems appropriate to work on positive reinforcement that might create more space to motivate children to change their behaviour for the better. This is related to another weakness in the work of the day-care centre, which parents mentioned. Negative children's behaviours, which affect the atmosphere of the classes, were mentioned by parents of first-form pupils (9.09%) and second-form pupils (7.14%).

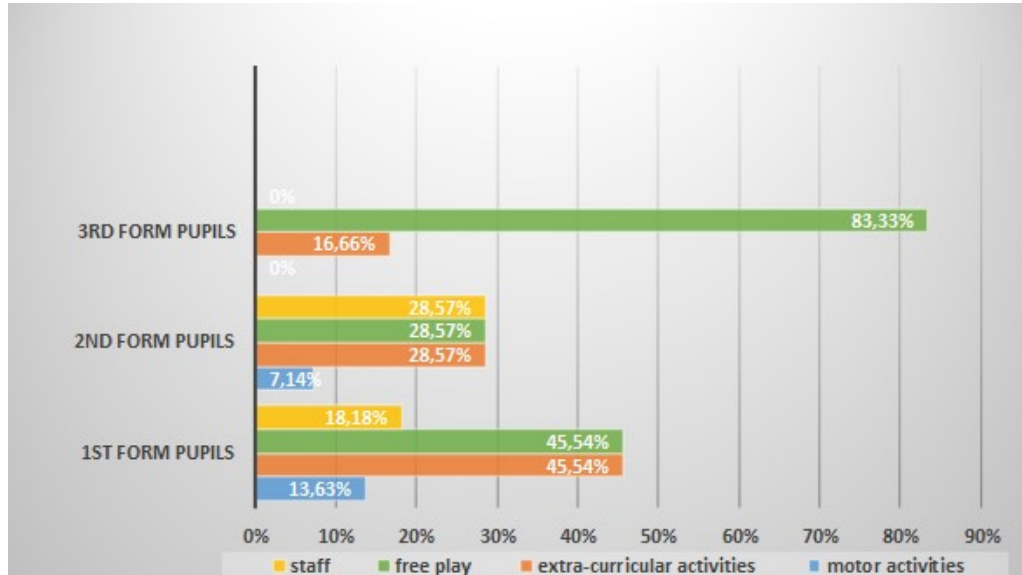
The final questions concerned the extra-curricular activities offered by the day-care centre. Their assessment by the parents of children of the third-form pupils was the highest, (4.64), followed by the parents of the first-form pupils, which was 4.64. The parents of children of the second-form assessed the extra-curricular activities as 4.5, which gave the worst result. The marks may be related to the next question in which the parents listed the extra-curricular activities which in their opinion are missing in the day-care centre work schedule. Language and sports activities were the most frequent.

The parents of first-form students also pointed out the need for more hours of programming classes.

The next questions were addressed to the children. They completed the survey in writing in the presence of their parents. The question whether children like spending time in the day-care centre was answered positively by 100% of children. The second question was: 'What do you like most in the day-care centre?' The most frequent answers are presented in Figure 5.

The areas of activity particularly liked by children from all the forms mentioned above are extra-curricular activities and free play time - the highest percentage of choices among third-form pupils (83.33%), followed by first-form (45%) and second-form (28.57%). Children from the second-form also point to the staff working in the day-care centre (28.57%), emphasizing their positive contribution to the score of day-care centre activities, also children from the first-form (18.18%) consider the staff as an strength of the day-care centre. In

Figure 5: The strengths of the day-care centre in the pupils' opinion. (By the Authors)



the light of the analysis of the results, the popularity of extra-curricular activities is also noticeable. 45.54% of first-form pupils, 28.57% of second-form pupils and 16.06% of third-form pupils indicated them as the strength of the day-care centre's work. Motor activities are also attractive for pupils, 13.63% of first form pupils and 7.14% of second form pupils consider them to be a liked element of the day-care centre's work. Then the children were asked to answer the question: *What do you dislike most about the day-care centre?*

The responses are shown in Figure 6.

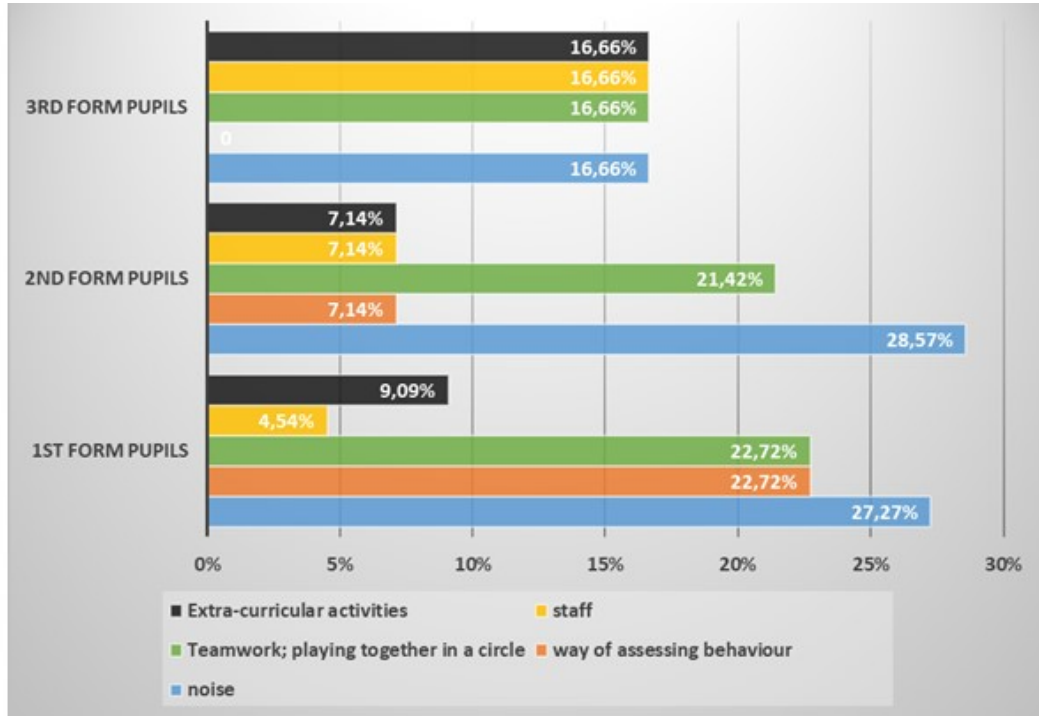
Based on the data contained in Figure 6, it can be assumed that, in the opinion of the pupils, the biggest weakness in the functioning of the day-care centre is noise. 28.57% of second-form pupils indicated it as a weakness of the day-care centre, followed by first-form pupils (27.27%) and third-form pupils (16.66%). It is generated by the pupils themselves, but it is perceived negatively by them.

It causes tiredness, difficulties in concentration and communication. A factor contributing to noise is the limited space of the school, which causes

many children spending time in one room. Noise is also caused by the fact that the age of the group varies, as well as various individual difficulties of the students, confirmed in diagnoses established at psychological and educational counselling centres.

Teachers make efforts to counteract the noise using assessment of the pupils' behaviour as a tool for this purpose, but it meets with low acceptance by children. The pupils surveyed pointed out that the team activities needed improvement. Most pupils from first-form see it as a negative aspect (22.72%), followed by second-form pupils (21.42%) and least third-form pupils (16.66%). Working together is a big effort for them. It can be assumed that this difficulty is due, among other things, to the fact that the children's educational needs vary a lot. Perhaps teachers do not always manage to motivate their pupils to cooperate properly or to apply the right methodology when working with such a varied group. The children's indications show that the issue of integration and cooperation in a group is still a challenge for the team of teachers. The same applies to the

Figure 6: Weaknesses in the work of the day-care centre in the pupils' opinion. (By the Authors)



assessment of behaviour, which was indicated by the pupils as a weak element in the work of the day-care centre. It was negatively assessed by the first-form students (22.72%) and second-form students (7.14%). 16.66% of the third-form pupils indicated problems with the teacher and specific additional activities which are not interesting.

Summary

A school day-care centre is a space for care and educational activities. It is a place where the idea of inclusive education can be successfully implemented. Children, regardless of their limitations, can spend time together before and after lessons, and the teacher should create the right conditions to support their development. The case study presented shows that the implementation of educa-

tional ideas always encounters difficulties, but these can be overcome. Such a process is taking place in the day-care centre under scrutiny. Taking into account the difficult conditions for inclusive education and the shortage of space in the school, the positive opinion concerning the functioning of the day-care centre should be emphasised. This score is high in most of the areas examined, which provides grounds for optimism regarding the process of implementing inclusive education in Poland.

The shortcomings that have been noted in connection with inclusion activities indicate that constant effort is required in order to optimise the work of the team of teachers as well as support from the authorities responsible for the school. This would enable e.g. more frequent outings, more sports activities or a modification of the behaviour assessment system. Pupils' opinions indi-

cate the areas that should still be present in the offer of the day-care centre, e.g. extra-curricular activities or free play. The need for freedom in the choice of activities and their forms determine the next stage in the development of the day-care centre scrutinised in this study.

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