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Title/ Título: From integration to inclusion: Parental views to the forefront

De la integración a la inclusión: Perspectivas de los padres en vanguardia

Topic: Educating exceptional children. The influence of family, school and social contexts

Educación de niños con necesidades específicas. Influencia de la familia, el centro docente y el contexto social

Presentation time/Día de presentación: Session in English. Friday 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Room 4, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Sala 4, Tercer Piso

Abstract

While integration was the main issue in the international discussions concerning the promotion of disabled persons' right to an appropriate education, inclusion has captured the field during the 90's and has become a global issue. As a fundamental issue of human rights, all children should be educated in mainstream neighbourhood schools, thus mainstream schools must change in whatever ways are necessary to make this possible. Cyprus education system is still in the era of integration, with the passing of the Law 113(I)/99, according to which, disabled children are entitled to education in their neighbourhood mainstream school. Recent studies have examined the attitudes of teachers and mainstream school pupils towards their disabled peers. The findings suggest that mainstream pupils face their peers mostly with pity and tolerance while teachers appear to begin to accept the idea of integration but are still extremely cautious concerning the vision of inclusion. Parents' views remain unexplored, despite the fact that their role has determined developments concerning legislation. The Salamanca Statement defined the importance of partnership between parents and school. The literature review reveals that most parents support inclusion and are convinced that their child's education is better in the mainstream school, whereas others are having concerns about teachers' lack of knowledge or appropriate support in the mainstream settings. Considering the above, it is pertinent to document parental perceptions regarding integrated environments. The present study explores the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of disabled children's parents in Cyprus. Specifically, the study investigates parental beliefs on how their children should be educated, their attitudes towards integration and inclusion, their views about the current situation and suggestions for future changes. Parental views will be examined in correlation to their gender, their child's age and type of special need.