PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTARCT

The scope of this study is to reveal the interconnection between psychological wellbeing and inclusive education. It is important to note that psychological wellbeing is a very complicated phenomenon and as such we need to describe the boundaries of its content. We suggest that the core of wellbeing is the subjective experience of social sufficiency of individual existence. On the other hand, the practice of the inclusive education is loaded with many social expectations, one of the main being to support psychological development and social consistency of the person. In the basis of exclusion stands the social diversity of the person. Negative feelings in the excluded individual provoke a decrease of psychological wellbeing. Thus, if we were to increase the effectiveness of the inclusive education, we would need to improve the psychological wellbeing of the individual. The improving could be realized through systematic social and psychological support, mainly in school and in the family.

Key Words: Psychological wellbeing, inclusive education, social support, personality, family.

INTRODUCTION

The inclusive education model aims to ensure supportive school environment so that successful socialization of children with special educational needs can be guaranteed. Meanwhile, apart from the social dimensions this pedagogy has psychological ones. What is meant are the subjective experiences of children with special educational needs who are included in the educational system. In this sense when the effectiveness of the inclusive education model is discussed, the psychological dimension of the problem should be had in mind, too.

Psychological wellbeing is recognized as a universal indicator for the presence of subjective readiness to perceive a certain social space as important to the individual. This construct still does not have consistent content. Nevertheless, it allows for integration within different explanatory models in connection with individual psychological functioning. It is even possible for separate parameters to be studied as indicators of psychological wellbeing, which would aid the empirical approach.

Inclusive education is an active pedagogical model targeted at all people with deficiencies, regardless of their nature. In this sense inclusive education has not only educational, but also social functions. As far as deficiencies hamper the individual lifestyle, that reflects on the psyche as inner tension and disappointment with the self. This in turn hinders the individuals' social activity and their social integration. The improvement of the psychological wellbeing can catalyze the individual potential and thus promote the better integration of the person. Hence managing the psychological wellbeing turns to be a pivotal point in inclusive education. In this regard it is important that the main activities which have to be performed be ordered in such a way as to pinpoint the priorities and increase the efficiency of pedagogues' and social workers' efforts.

THEORY

A study conducted in Australia in 2011 with 466 teachers predicts that more than 90 per cent of them accept that the care for students' wellbeing improves the learning environment as a whole, as well as the other way round - teachers' wellbeing leads to improvement in the wellbeing of students (Roffey, 2012). The teachers

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point out that wellbeing improves learning achievement as well as students' psychological health. Seven main directions for increasing wellbeing at school are delineated: supportive school community, pro-social values, safe school environment, teaching social and emotional intelligence, applying the development of strong points model, improvement of the sensible and goal-oriented behaviour and promoting a healthy way of living (Roffey, 2012). It is of particular importance that the sense of interconnectedness and inclusion in school be developed. This improves both the learning achievement and students' wellbeing.

Social environment is hard for the individual to control, since he/ she is in a space modeled by other people. In this sense it is especially important in the case of adolescents that social support should be ensured, so that the individual can be able to deal successfully with daily tasks. Here school plays a significant part as it has to create an environment of acceptance of and support for the ones who are different. This is the only way these children can get a chance for social inclusion. It can help them not only for increasing their knowledge and developing their social skills, but also for improving their psychological wellbeing. Obviously, it is important that a difference should be made between subjective wellbeing and the objective factors of the environment that exert influence on its state (Pontin et al., 2013). Subjective wellbeing is defined as the individual self-evaluation of experiencing wellbeing. Thus the supportive learning environment is an objective factor which influences the subjective experiencing wellbeing. At the same time it is important to note that positive psychological functioning is related mainly to forming and maintaining a positive attitude towards oneself (Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013). We cannot expect adolescents with special educational needs to create a positive attitude towards themselves, having in mind that the typical social environment is not understanding and supportive.

Mechanisms of wellbeing

A different approach to understanding wellbeing is presented in Sarah White's article (White, 2010). She appeals for active policy of developing personal potentials and the recognition and integration of differences among individuals. Thus the emphasis is moved from the mere aid to the ones in need aimed at sustaining their existence, but without changing their capacity, to looking into ways of supporting their development, which would provide for them different opportunities for social realization and thus increase their wellbeing. This should be viewed as "a complex of priorities, strategies, influences, activities and results through that" (White, 2010). In this article the author points out that the development of wellbeing can be viewed in three interrelated areas – material, interactive and subjective.

In a study Cummins et al. (2004) assume that subjective wellbeing functions on the homeostatic principle, being supported by a framework of psychological instruments. However, what they mean is an abstract level of wellbeing, which does not have concrete dimensions, but is like a general perception. They also propose the idea that subjective wellbeing is developed along the "proximal-distal" line (Cummins et al. 2004). When the focus is shifted from the shift to the surrounding environment, i.e. when the individual starts perceiving the surrounding factors, his/ her subjective wellbeing decreases. Bourke & Geldens' view (2007)is in the same direction. They claim that for the majority of young people wellbeing is "multidimensional, holistic and centered round their own lives". That increases the role of inclusive education for children with special educational needs even more, since they already have problems with social adaptation and self-realization. They cannot operationalize the referent environment to a sufficient degree either on the cognitive or on the practical plane. Therefore, this holism is fully natural and should be used.

A study by Nielsen, Smyth, Zhai & Zhang (2008) shows that subjective wellbeing should be viewed as a homeostatic system with a lower and an upper limit. In order to sustain homeostasis/ wellbeing a certain level of functioning should be maintained. However, when the lower limit is crossed, this monitor mechanism ceases to exist. There are so called buffers of wellbeing which are external and internal. The main external buffers are income and relationships. The main internal buffers use cognitive instruments for transforming the negative experience. An example confirming this claim is the data from a research on the psychological wellbeing of talented and gifted children (Jones, 2013). Since they have a strong psycho-social potential, they can reach high levels of personal and social activity, which increases their self-esteem, making them positively minded and increasing their wellbeing.

Michalos (2008) draws attention to the role of education in forming social capital. This in turn is a prerequisite for improvement of psychological wellbeing. He also puts emphasis on the social determinants of wellbeing in general, such as labour and social ideas. In this line of thought it is especially important that the wellbeing of children with special educational needs should be viewed and developed in the context of improving their social environment, by investing in the creation of supportive material and spiritual reality in school environment as well. Through acquired knowledge and critical experience education enables the person to transform cognitively the information about the self and the environment. This in turn allows for overcoming negative experience (Stevens et al., 2011). Furthermore, the behaviour of better educated people is more goal-oriented, which enables them to build a clear coordinate system of their own behaviour and thus decrease the risk of random actions (Deci & Ryan, 2011).

The relationships with the close circle of people are assumed to be a serious source of subjective self-esteem, hence of increasing wellbeing (Bourke & Geldens, 2007). On the one hand, this, according to the authors cited is especially valid for school students. On the other hand subjective wellbeing is a matter of individual self-evaluation which is not always adequate (Bourke & Geldens, 2007). Friendship is a very important instrument for social realisation with adolescents. It is especially necessary for children with various deficiencies (Simpson, 2012). They are severely hampered in making and maintaining friendships because of the distant attitude on part of the others. That leads them to groups of similar people where they receive emotional support (Simpson, 2012).

Social environment exerts both a direct and an indirect influence on psychological wellbeing. Among the factors which have a direct link are the home, the street and the neighbourhood (Homel & Burns, 1989). Yet other three components are of importance for adolescents' subjective wellbeing – contentment with life, emotional adaptation and social adaptation (Homel & Burns, 1989). The other space which is supportive for them is the family. However, wellbeing necessitates a representation of a wider range of corresponding spaces. However, in order to achieve greater self-esteem and thus increase their level of subjective wellbeing, adolescents with deficiencies have to be actively included in educational activity, which can only happen in the context of inclusive education. Levy and Sabbagh (2008) demonstrate that the living space, with regard to which wellbeing is projected, is composed of four areas: interpersonal, intrapersonal, social environment and global wellbeing. It has been proven in a number of studies that the socio-economic conditions in a society are important for the formation of psychological wellbeing. Interestingly enough, this is valid for basic necessities only and there is a saturation level, above which the increase of economic resources of the individual does not lead to an increase in his/ her wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2011). A specific source of psychological wellbeing is religiousness, which integrates the intrapersonal space by setting clear and sustainable directions of functioning. Thus the individual becomes consistent in his/ her behaviour and experiencing reality, and this orders his/ her daily life and thoughts and thus he/ she achieves psychological wellbeing (Hafeez & Rafique, 2013).

Factors of wellbeing

Wellbeing is an integral phenomenon, which includes both passive-experiential components and active-transforming ones. In this sense we can talk about wellbeing factors which represent namely the active-transforming dimension. This space has been researched into for decades during which time a certain consensus has been reached, which is manifested mainly in the predominant use of the 'social capital' and 'positive psychological functioning' categories.

Social capital is the totality of social relations and practices aimed at developing the individual and the social potentials. (Putnam, 2009). When the individual perceives him-/ herself as a part of supporting social space, he/ she is content with the world and thus increases his/ her psychological wellbeing. Social capital is viewed as a network of social relations as well, which are based on mutual support faith in the other person, social inclusion, commitment on part of local institutions, commitment on part of citizens, good ecological conditions, fighting discrimination and poverty, actively promoting health.

The term 'social capital' has to be grasped as the sum total of the significant, reciprocal and fruitful interconnections and social networks, which are used as an asset for developing society and its members. Those are interactions among citizens which facilitate the solutions to common problems, increase mutual trust, mutual assistance and abiding by social norms. The relation between individual capital and social capital is also important. It is assumed that the well-functioning social capital increases the individual's coping skills. According to Putnam (2009) social capital can be viewed as 'collective asset' or 'common good' for the community.

Another attempt at description presents wellbeing as a characteristic trait of positive psychological functioning, which includes: positive emotionality, contentment with life and meaning of life (Grant et al., 2013). Some sources define the so-called positive psychological capital (Bin et al., 2014). What is meant by it is: the ability to achieve goals (coping-efficacy), orientation towards future success (optimism), active position with regard to the changing environment (hope) and sustainability of aspiration (resilience). It is evident that positive psychological functioning is a factor in the individual's social realization. When the aforementioned personal qualities are present, the person is capable of coping with daily challenges and overcoming the disappointment of failure. In this sense the term 'positive psychological functioning' has to be understood as a totality of personal qualities of cognitive, emotional and conative nature which increase the individual's social and psychological efficiency.

Jones (2013) avers that when psychological wellbeing is discussed, what is meant is the way a person thinks of and feels about him-/ herself, his/ her ecological surrounding and the social networks he/ she participates in.

In addition, in the studies on wellbeing there is also a consensus around the introduction of two basic forms of wellbeing – subjective and psychological (Kallay, 2013).

On the one hand subjective wellbeing is defined as experiencing pleasure-displeasure and presents the valency of wellbeing. On the other hand psychological wellbeing is defined, which presents the presence or absence of certain personal qualities which directly determine its development. This side of wellbeing is construed as functional. In this sense in the case of a particular individual there could be presence of subjective wellbeing, despite functional deficiency (absence of psychological wellbeing). It is deemed that psychological wellbeing has six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, ability to influence the surrounding environment, goal-orientedness and personal growth (Kallay, 2013).

Subjective wellbeing is measured through experiencing self-acceptance and contentment with achievements in life. At the same time this dimension of wellbeing is rather holistic in nature. It is usually accepted that the perception of joy, security and optimism are the expression of subjective wellbeing. In some cases experiencing happiness is also discussed, but in our opinion this is rather a transient and extraordinary condition.

METHOD

In order to verify our ideas, an empirical study has been carried out, using two main methods – meta-analysis and content analysis.

Meta-analysis presupposes access to a large volume of publications, due to which electronic databases are preferred (Crombie & Huw, 2009). A significant aspect of the meta-analysis is the so called sensitive analysis (Crombie & Huw, 2009), which is aimed at integrating the data studied in such a way as to register the main tendencies in the object of research among analysed publications. Another important aspect of content analysis is its heterogeneity (Crombie & Huw, 2009). That is the degree to which combinable research enters the publications sample, which means that they should be both independent of one another and consistent.

Having taken into account these main methodological directions, the following model of content analysis has been proposed. Electronic databases were chosen for the meta-analysis needs. The EBSCO and JSTOR electronic databases of scientific periodicals were used. The principle on which publications to be included in

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the meta-analysis were chosen was the presence of the 'psychological wellbeing' key phrase in the title of the article. The search continued until reaching a page which did not contain the key phrase mentioned in the title. Thus the total number of publications found was 43.

The content analysis was carried out through obtaining descriptors of the 'psychological wellbeing' construct which are present in the articles analysed. The inductive variant of content analysis was used (Elo, Kinga, 2008). The aim of the content analysis is to describe the phenomenon entirely and profoundly, the result being defining a new category or a category framework (Elo, Kinga, 2008). In this case our goal was to make a list of descriptors of psychological wellbeing, attempting to group them around larger categories on the similarity principle at the same time. Grouping is done through interpretation of each of the categories, so that they can ultimately be included in a certain group of descriptors. Semantic analysis is accepted to be complementary to content analysis (Smelser & Baltes, eds., 2001). These authors also draw on a Shapiro's idea. The latter differentiates between instrumental and representative content analysis. This study makes use of instrumental analysis, which is aimed at optimal presentation of the semantic frame of the 'psychological wellbeing' construct. The analysis was performed on words within the topic stated. Initially categories defining wellbeing were obtained from each of the articles analysed. The vast majority of articles contained explicitly stated descriptors. In the rest of them these categories were explicitly pointed out by the authors as semantically related to wellbeing.   Out of the initial list of descriptors compiled the synonymous ones were defined. Thus the initial list was reduced and the final list was created, consisting of 47 descriptors presented in Table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After compiling the list of descriptors quantitative and qualitative analyses of the categories were performed.

The total number of extracted descriptors is 47, having however different object semantics. In this line of thought it is necessary that a latent semantic space should be sought, which would serve as a matrix for structuring them. As it became clear from the analysis done at the beginning, there are different models of structuring of the 'wellbeing' construct. An attempt was made in this study to define several latent factors which describe wellbeing. Thus a 4-dimensional space was formed, which includes: social context, interaction, personality and subjectivity (cf. Table 1).

The 'social context' factor represents the objective social givens which the individual cannot change, since they are beyond his/ her control. At the same time the perimeter of activity that the individual can realise depends to a large extent on the quality of those parameters. When those social parameters are unfavourable, the individual could very difficultly achieve self-efficacy.

The 'interaction' factor represents a space in which the individual has room for activity, which can, however, be beneficial for him/ her only if he/she has social partners in collaboration. Due to this reason interaction is both free, allowing personal expansion, and limited by the interests of others with whom the individual is connected.

The 'personality' factor includes personal qualities which the individual can develop independently and thus increase his/her capacity. Here the ability to manage one's conduct, using those qualities, is of particular importance.

The 'subjectivity' factor actually represents the so called subjective wellbeing. It includes the subjective experiencing of connectedness to the world and internal harmony. In more expressed registers joy or even happiness can be experienced.

Table 1: Wellbeing Descriptors Index

social context		interaction		personality		subjectivity		
category	numbers	category	numbers	category	numbers	category	numbers	t-test
income	22	health	24	work and leisure	24	beauty	11	
education	18	environm. mastery	19	religiousness	7	happiness	7	social
social networks	12	relationships qual.	17	personality	7	self-esteem	7	t=3,010*
city	12	life qual.	14	personal growth	6	positive feelings	5	interrel.
environment	3	family satisfaction	13	physical activity	5	joyful	5	t=4,512**
culture	2	future security	8	coping-efficacy	5	self-acceptance	5	person.
government	2	achievements	6	purpose in life	5	self-identity	2	t=3,430***
business	1	autonomy	4	self-management	3	safe	2	subjective
national security	1	friendships	4	love	3	fame	1	t=4,540****
		good behavior	2	sex	2	optimism	1	
		nutrition	2	sleep	2			
				intelligence	2			
				skills	2			
				commitment	1			
				resilience	1			
				affiliativeness	1			
				assertiveness	1			

*p=.017   **p=.001   ***p=.003   ****p=.001

What makes greatest impression is the uneven distribution of results both among the four dimensions and within them – among the categories included (cf. Table 1). It is clear that they do not have equal values with regard to the phenomenon described. In this sense we can divide the results obtained into three groups. The first group includes categories with high descriptive potential, the second – with medium descriptive potential and the third – with low descriptive potential. The intervals defined are the following: for group one – more than 10 mentions, for group two – from 5 to 9 mentions and for group 3 – from 1 to 4 mentions (cf. Fig. 1).

Descriptors entering the first group are: health (24), work and leisure (24), income (22), environmental mastery (19), education (18), relationships quality (17), life quality (14), family satisfaction (13), social networks (12), city (12), beauty (11).

Descriptors entering the second group are: future security (8), religiousness (7), personality (7), happiness (7), self-esteem (7), personal growth (6), achievements in live (6), physical activity (5), coping-efficacy (5), purpose in life (5), positive feelings (5), joyful (5), self-acceptance (5).

Descriptors entering the third group are: autonomy (4), friendships (4), environment (3), self-management (3), love (3), culture (2), government (2), good behavior (2), nutrition (2), sex (2), sleep (2), intelligence (2), skills (2), self-identity (2), safe (2), fame (1), optimism (1), commitment (1), resilience (1), affiliativeness (1), assertiveness (1), business (1), national security (1).

The largest group is the third one, the second largest is the second one and the smallest is the third one. This provides certain grounds for a claim that the content of the construct is dynamic, allowing for additional prescriptors to be included in the periphery, as well as the individual weight of prescriptors to be changed altogether. Certainly that will not be applicable to the items in the first group which can be defined as hard core. Probably in the second group more empirical data have to be collected in order to verify the representative weight of the descriptors included.
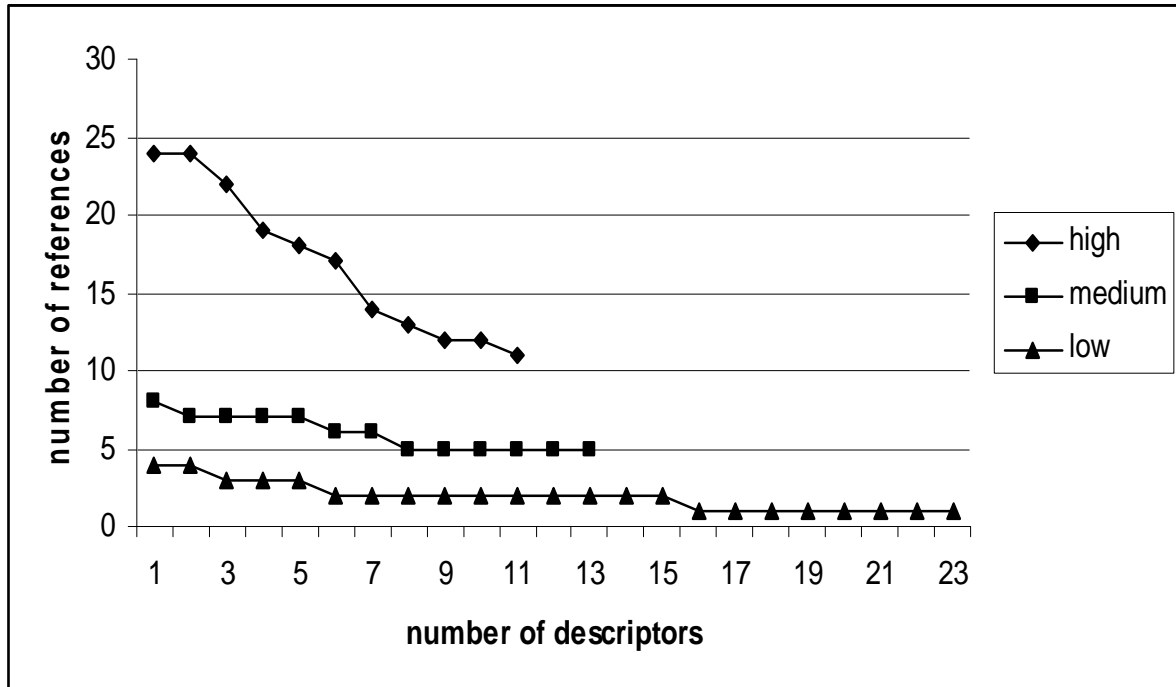
Fig. 1: Groups of Descriptors according Number of References

The first group contains 5 descriptors of the 'interaction' factor, 4 descriptors of the 'social context' factor and 1 descriptor of the 'personality' and 'subjectivity' factors each. The second group contains 6 descriptors of the 'personality' factor, 5 descriptors of the 'subjectivity' factor and 2 descriptors of the 'interaction' factor. The third group contains 10 descriptors of the 'personality' factor, 5 descriptors of the 'social context' factor ad 4 of each of the 'interaction' and 'subjectivity' factors.

This distribution shows that the most volatile descriptors are the ones from the personal space and steadiest – the ones from the interaction space. At the same time of each of the categories has a different length, the largest being the 'personality" category, the smallest one – the 'subjectivity' category.

At the same time it is evident that the content of each of the defined factors are different. This applies both to the structuring semantics , and to the number of the descriptors contained in the factors (see Fig. 2). Thus the total space of the construct "wellbeing" is not equally distributed among the four factors. The largest portion is of the factor "interaction" whose descriptors were selected 113 times. Second factor is the "personality" with 77 selections , the third factor is "social context" with a total of 73 selections and last factor is "subjectivity" with 46 selections. At the same time it should be taken into account and the capacity of the factor. From this perspective, the ratio is different. The largest number of descriptors is contained in the factor " personality" – 17, second factor is " interaction " - 11 , third factor is " subjectivity " - 10 and the fourth factor is "social context" - 9.
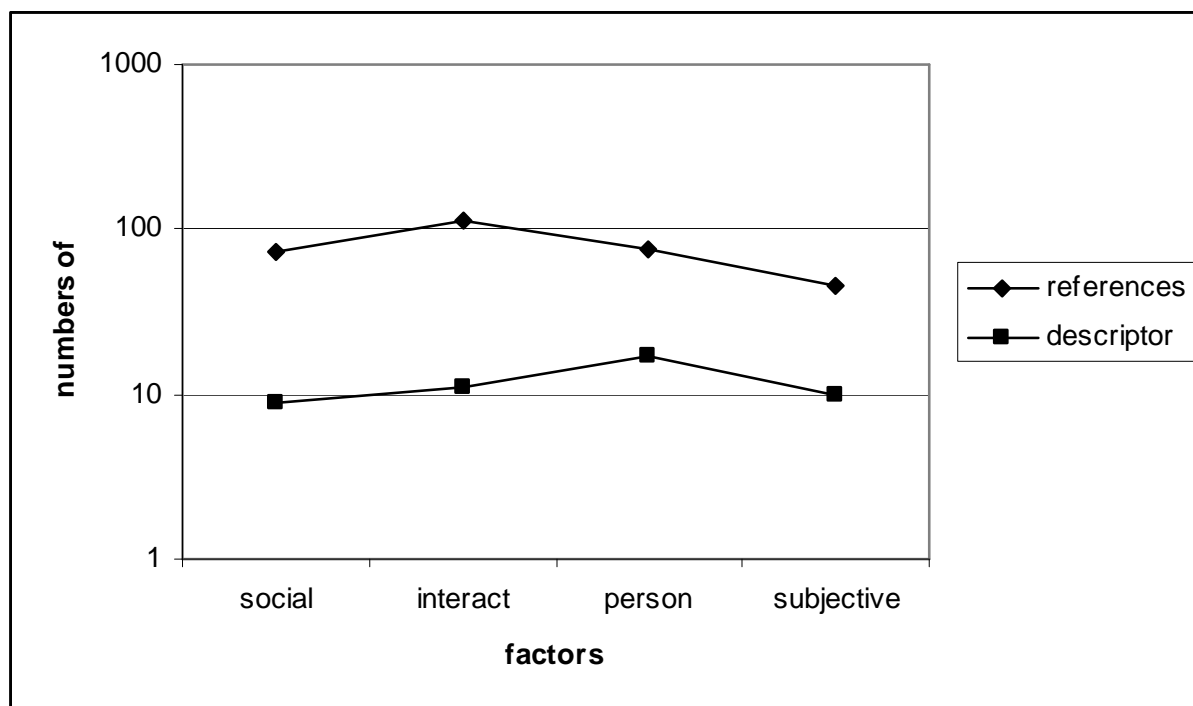
t=5,613 p=.0,11, references
t=6,539 p=.0,007, descriptors
Fig. 2: Numbers of References and Descriptors in Factors

CONCLUSION

Having in mind that children with special educational needs have certain difficulties in the process of socialization, it is of great importance that supportive social environment to aid their personal development should be created. Such a system is inclusive education.   Wellbeing is an efficient instrument for personal functioning optimisation. That is why it is necessary for pedagogues' efforts to be aimed at managing children's psychological wellbeing. It is evident form the results presented that there are several main points which have to be emphasised.

First, interrelations and interaction with adolescents should be improved. This includes: care for their health, care for their life quality, care for forming and developing friendships. Here pedagogues should also encourage students' self-reliance, form appropriate social skills and cultivate goal-oriented behaviour.

Second, inclusive education should invest in the development of adolescents' personal potential, taking into account, of course, their limitations. The results and analyses given show that this namely is the largest space related to wellbeing. Here attention should be paid to: learning activity, physical activity, free time, personal growth, coping strategies, as well as forming positive attitudes towards the others.

Thirdly, pedagogues could improve the psychological wellbeing of children with special educational needs by showing emotional support for positive subjective feelings related to wellbeing as self-acceptance, optimism, joy and security.

Certainly this can be realized only if pedagogues are motivated and well prepared for work under such circumstances. For this purpose it will be necessary that they should be additionally prepared in the field of psychology and pedagogy of wellbeing.

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