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Emotional and Social Needs of Integrated Disabled Students in Secondary School Environment

Magdalena Hanková[a]*, & Soňa Vávrová[b]

[a] *Research Centre of FHS, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Mostní 5139, 760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic*
[b] *Research Centre of FHS, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Mostní 5139, 760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic*

Abstract

The paper deals with emotional and social needs of integrated disabled pupils in the secondary school environment. The authors focused on the perception of emotional and social needs of pupils with physical disabilities who were individually integrated into a standard secondary school five years ago at the latest. The aim of the research was to determine how graduates with physical disabilities reflect on their emotional and social needs and their fulfillment in the secondary school environment. Its purpose was also to reveal how the participants describe their position within the school class. With regard to the research objectives, the authors decided for a qualitative research strategy using semi-structured interviews and an interpretative phenomenological analysis. The results showed that the emotions of the informants are mainly determined by their insufficiently fulfilled social needs. The graduates intensely experienced distrust of their classmates, but also a certain initial reluctance of the teachers to accept their specific needs. This stemmed from the lack of interpersonal communication and cooperation and the lack of shared experiences in the school environment.

Keywords: Physical Disability; Emotions; Relationships; Inclusion; IPA

1. The socio-psychological aspects of the education of adolescents with physical disabilities

The provision of education is one of the main functions of a modern state, as the education of a nation is an expression of its cultural level and its level of advancement (Michalík, 2013). For this reason, the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic - White Paper (2001) declares that it is

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +420 576 037 404.
  E-mail address: hankova@fhs.utb.cz

necessary to "fundamentally change the traditional concept of education, to adapt its content, form and methods to the needs of children and pupils with special educational needs and negotiate broad social support for this change." The innovative changes mentioned above are also the central goal of the Czech educational policy at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, as we continue to see an effort for the implementation of the new principles of education policy and curricular documents aimed at ending the segregation of educational practice (Hájková & Strnadová, 2010). In light of this, we can trace the growing trend of individual integration. In accordance with Czech legislation, this will be understood as "learning in a secondary school classroom, which is not separately designated for pupils with special educational needs, while simultaneously ensuring adequate educational conditions and necessary special pedagogical and psychological care" (Ministry of Education of the CR, 2002). As the name of the study suggests, we focus our attention on the environment of secondary schools, because in this educational stream a significant increase in pupils with disabilities is occurring. This is illustrated for example by the findings of Pikálková (2010) and Vančurová (2011), which show in the 2010/2011 school year that 1/3 of the total number of persons with disabilities (18,700) were individually integrated into mainstream classes at 562 Czech secondary schools.

However as Tassoni pointed out (2003), a well-rounded education and individual integration can only take place in an environment with real interpersonal relationships. It is therefore necessary to accept that every human being is capable of feeling and needs the right to communicate and be heard. Apart from this, they also need to be in contact with other people and require the support and friendship of their peers. These needs come to the forefront particularly in late adolescence (15-20 years), which corresponds to secondary education, during which there is a complete change of personality. At the same time, a significant role in this phase is played not only by physical appearance, which is an important indicator of social attraction, but also by the peer group, which for an adolescent is a source of emotional support and understanding (Vágnerová, 2012).

On the other hand, a physical disability, which can be defined as "a persistent or permanent conspicuousness, a decreased ability to move with a long-term or significant effect on cognitive, emotional and social performance" (Renotiérová & Ludíková et al., 2006), is often characterized by deprivation in the stimulus, emotional and social areas, resulting in the fact that the affected individual is frequently not able to achieve certain psycho-social needs in the usual manner (Novosad, 2011). These assumptions are fully in line with the findings of Hemmingson & Borell (2001) and Doubt & McColl (2003), declaring that adolescents with physical disabilities have limited social contact and thus experience with peers and pupils without disabilities, which can affect their educational opportunities. Likewise the research papers of Maag & Katsiyannis (2012) and Trhlíková (2009) points out that pupilss with visible physical disabilities are among those in the risk group threatened by bullying. Specifically, they are confronted with negative comments against their person, with humiliation, spitefulness or with not being part of the group.

If we therefore, consistent with Urban (2011), understand human physicality as a key phenomenon for the clarification and understanding of the nature of our personality, cognitive and experiential relation to the world and our interpersonal communion, then a physical disability is viewed not only as a somatic problem, but also as a psychological and social condition (Murphy, 2001). Disability studies aiming to deconstruct the concept of disability within the meaning of a radical reevaluation of disability as a phenomenon exclusively caused by biological deficiency are also inclined toward this thesis according to Kolářová (2012). It is therefore necessary to view physical disability as a socially produced relationship and social difference.

Due to the aforementioned, in our study we diverge from the traditional view of school integration, which declares that it is primarily a pedagogical process (e.g. Bürli, Vítková, Müller) while our intention, on the contrary, is to view school integration as a permanently open and changing state, which should reflect, inter alia, the psychological and social relationship needs of educants with disabilities. However, the above aspects of school integration in Czech and foreign professional works are unjustly neglected, despite the fact that these interrelated areas of human needs are not only a predictor of the successful realization of educational goals, but also a high-quality classroom climate (Čapek, 2010; Gillernová & Krejčová et al., 2012). At the same time it is precisely the school that should teach pupils respect for the diversity and individuality of different people, in line with its socially integrative functions. Likewise, however, they should teach them to assess others, understand them and form relevant relationships and communication with them (Havlík & Koťa, 2011).

2. Emotional and social needs in the secondary school environment as a subject of research

When characterizing **emotional needs** we will proceed from the assumption that emotions are defined and viewed through social relationships and should therefore be seen as the basis of behavior in the relationships in which we belong. Emotions cannot be separated from the social world, as they are an integral part of it (Slaměník, 2011). For this study so-called secondary emotions, that have a close relationship with the social environment and may take the form of admiration, respect, contempt or envy (Nakonečný, 2012), are crucial. Many authors (Keltner, Haidt, Averill, Sarbin etc.) even speak about the dual role of social emotions. Emotions both help establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationships with peers, teachers and the class as a distinct and small social group. Secondly, they help individuals to differentiate themselves from classmates and compete with them for social status. In the context of emotional needs, we focus on the analysis of how graduates with physical disabilities felt in the secondary school environment and what they experienced there.

The starting point in defining **social needs** with us becomes the fact that every human being needs the company of other people, thus the need for affiliation, altruism, cooperation, self-realization and communication with other people comes to the forefront (Šamánková et al., 2011). Social needs are then the basic acquired motives and new tendencies that are associated with basic interpersonal relationships, and which people create in the course of life in contact with other people, groups or institutions (Atkinson, 2003). In the framework of the research, we will focus partly on the analysis of interpersonal relationships formed in the secondary school environment, but also on the cooperation between the individually integrated pupils and other actors of education or their social status in the class group.

We will understand the **secondary school environment** as a certain space, an objective reality, which includes two basic systems - the system of the adult world and the system of the world of peers. It is therefore an environment where scholarization occurs, thanks to which the individual becomes a pupil, but at the same time there is space for natural socialization, and thus the person also becomes a classmate (Procházka, 2012). Therefore, within the framework of the research, attention will be paid not only to the educational processes taking place in the school, but also to the socialization processes which occur in the school outside of the intentional actions of the teachers (e.g. during the breaks).

3. Methodology of research

Based on the study of professional literature the basic premise of the research was established, namely that although pupils with a physical disability are individually integrated in the environment of secondary schools, they may suffer hardship in terms of emotional and social needs. **The main aim** will therefore be to determine how graduates with physical disabilities reflect on their emotional and social needs in the secondary school environment. At the same time, emphasis will be placed on how participants retrospectively perceive the fulfilling of their emotional and social needs in the secondary school environment, as well as their position in the class group. **The main research question** is: How do graduates with physical disabilities reflect on their emotional and social needs in the secondary school environment?

With regard to the research goal, a **qualitative research strategy** with the use of a **semi-structured interview** was chosen. This method enabled both the creation of the space and conditions for the self-expression of the participants, but equally it was possible to adapt the wording of the open questions, which in the course of the interview appeared to be significant in relation to the researched phenomenon. When analyzing the data we apply the **interpretative phenomenological analysis** (IPA), which aim is to explore the detailed view of the participant on the subject of the inquiry, i.e. understanding the depth and structure of the individual experience or the importance of this experience - the essence of the phenomenon (Šíp & Gulová, 2013). As Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) add, an IPA is characterized by a small research sample, which in our research consists of five participants. Its **homogeneity** was filled with the following criteria: These are individuals with physical disabilities (cerebral palsy or spinal muscular atrophy), who within attendance at a normal secondary school were individually integrated and completed

their study five years ago at the latest. Further characteristics of the research sample, which was filled by the **snowball sampling** technique, are offered by Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of the research sample

The name of the participant *	Diagnosis	Time since the completion of secondary school	Type of school
Kamila	Cerebral palsy - quadruparesis	5 years	Gymnasium
Sandra	Spinal muscular atrophy- Werdning -Hoffmann	2 years	Secondary Vocational School
Libor	Spinal muscular atrophy - Kugelberg-Welander	5 years	Secondary Technical School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
Radka	Cerebral palsy - quadruparesis	4 years	Secondary Vocational School
Tamara	Spinal muscular atrophy type II	5 years	Secondary Vocational School

Own research (2015)

* Before beginning the implementation phase, participants received and signed an informed consent form, which includes the promise of not disclosing their true identity.

4. Analysis of the data

The recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim, including the emphasis on conspicuous speech symptoms (laughs, pauses, slips of the tongue etc.). In accordance with the recommendations of Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), the transcripts were then repeatedly read and data fragments, which seemed to us to be significant, were underlined. At the same time, the raw data was supplemented by descriptive comments, relating to the content of the text and conceptual comments, whose core was our thoughts and questions for the depositions. During the writing of notes, scientific terms which concisely cover the relevant data fragments were used, but also notes that reflected the perspective of the participants themselves. The same approach was used to identify themes and patterns emerging from the talks, while it was precisely the initial remarks that played an important role. At this stage, however, we focused on both convergence and divergence and on unique nuances emerging from the data. For these purposes, any emergent theme was noted in the table and complemented with the localization of the data fragment, which represents the given theme. At the same time, a unification of the coherent themes related to super-ordinate themes occurred, and these were subsequently supplemented by subthemes. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) note that when working with a larger research sample on the signification of the individual recurrent themes, primarily their occurrence in the data is decisive. In other words, a theme can be identified as relevant if it occurs with at least one third, half or all participants. In accordance with the rule, 6 themes were identified in the data, whose frequency is contained in Table 2.

Table 2 List of themes arising in the context of the IPA analysis and their graphical representation

1. Super-ordinate theme: Interpersonal relationships and emotions in the school environment					
	Kamila	Sandra	Libor	Radka	Tamara
Subtheme 1a: Dyad of the integrated pupil-classmates					
Indifference and ignorance on the part of classmates	*			*	
Relationships based on the distrust of classmates	*	*			
The long road to convergence	*	*		*	
Crucial situation - convergence	*	*		*	
Building friendly relations	*			*	*
Subtheme 1b: Dyad of the integrated pupil - teachers					

Evolving relationships resulting in an epiphany in teachers	*		*	*	*
Relationships based on support (understanding and trust)	*	*	*	*	*
Equal approach			*	*	*
Relations based on the disengagement of teachers	*			*	*
Subtheme 1c: The inner world of the physically disabled pupil					
Fear of failure and lack of trust in oneself	*			*	*
Feelings of inferiority				*	*
Feelings of loneliness		*		*	
Feelings of regret	*		*	*	
2. Super-ordinate theme: Coexistence in the social world of the secondary school					
Subtheme 2a: Communication and cooperation with classmates					
The effort to establish closer contact	*	*		*	
Emergency cooperation	*	*		*	
Limited opportunities for cooperation in education			*	*	*
Mutual assistance and support in the context of school work			*		*
Subtheme 2b: Communication with teachers					
Mediated (educational advisor/assistant)	*			*	
Based on a lack of interest in pupil's needs	*			*	
3. Theme: Class stratification					
Outsider or "Me and the others"	*	*		*	
Normal pupil or "Not in the center, nor outside of the action"		*			*
In the center of the action or, "I have my place in the class and they do not make differences"			*		*
4. Theme: Significant needs linked to the secondary school environment					
The need of belonging to the class group	*	*	*	*	*
Need to show that "I'm not different"	*	*		*	*
The need for friendship	*	*	*	*	*
The need for equivalence and justice	*		*	*	*
5. Theme: Determinants of the fulfillment of emotional and social needs					
Social isolation: The absence of common experiences	*	*	*	*	
Personality characteristics of a pupil with physical disabilities	*	*		*	
Assistant as a barrier of convergence with classmates		*	*	*	
6. Theme: Defensive and compensatory strategies					
Belief in the enlightenment of classmates	*			*	
The study results as a priority	*			*	

Own research (2015)

Our next step was in line with the books of Osborn & Smith (2003), Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) and Gulová & Šíp (2013) in identifying relations between the identified themes and subthemes (see Fig. 1). In achieving this goal, the conceptual comments became support that was reviewed during the analysis and compared with the raw data. The output of this analysis phase is a diagram showing the connections and influence of individual themes, which simultaneously became a starting point for us in the interpretation of the research results.
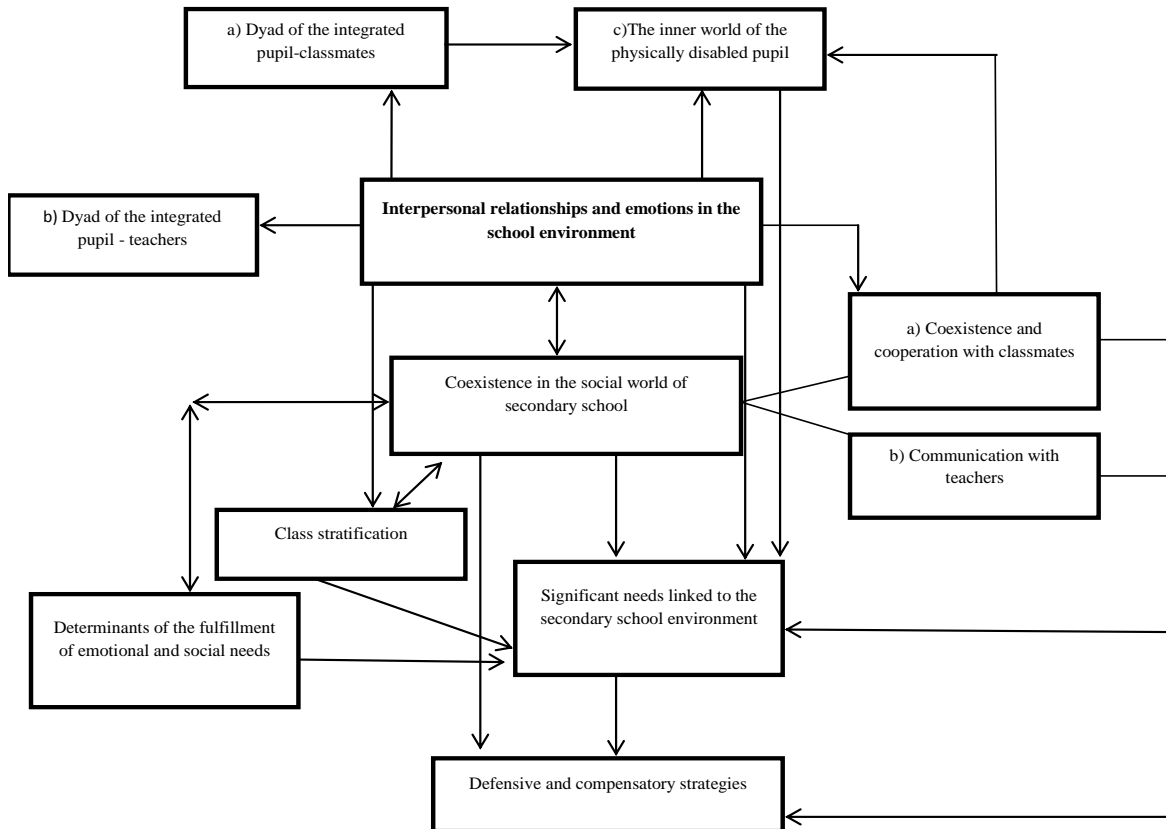
Figure 1 A figure illustrating the connections and influences of the themes identified in the framework of the IPA analysis (Own research, 2015).

5. The research results and their interpretation

The analysis of the data showed that the central theme, around which all other themes and subthemes concentrate is ***interpersonal relationships and emotions in the school environment.*** The relationships formed in the researched environment can be formal (the dyad of the integrated pupil - teachers) and informal (the dyad of the integrated pupil - classmates). From the above figure, it is however evident that a significant role in fulfilling the emotional and social needs of pupils with disabilities is played by the dyad of an informal nature, within which emotional bonds developed from initial indifference to understanding and acceptance: *"They were deciding whether to go to a cottage together and I knew that they weren't planning on including me at all. They dealt with all the details about it without me, nobody came and asked how I see it. They did not even feel the need to tell me that something like this was taking place. At that moment I was not surprised, but obviously I was terribly disappointed"* (R27, R28). Distrust in the capabilities and skills of the integrated classmate, as illustrated, for example, by this testimony, negatively intervened in relations arising in the context of the class group: *"They did not speak with me and I even remember that they told me that they think the assistant simply told me everything"* (K2) or "*maybe when I got the only A, so I felt that they looked at me as if they did not believe it*" (S4). The lack of personal experience with people with physical disabilities also played an equally important role, namely in the lack of awareness and preparation for interaction with this individual The data also showed that the lack of shared experiences with classmates and the presence of an assistant in the class were further barriers in strengthening relations with peers. This was subsequently reflected in coexistence with classmates and ultimately generated particular social needs of the participants: *"They had never met anyone like this before, and did not know how to communicate with the person. If*

they even can, if the person will allow it. Or if I would refuse them when they ask me to go somewhere with them"
(K6). Libor on the contrary, mentioned the issue of social isolation: *"When we were like friends in the class, others were maybe friends outside of school, and I suffered a little bit from the fact that the school was an absolute barrier. I did not quite have the option to go with them after school to pubs, for example*" (L15). Kamila several times emotionally talked about the influence of assistants on interpersonal relationships: *"I think she unwittingly influenced things there. I think it could be: "She only speaks to her, so why would she speak with us." Maybe if she was not there, communication would have happened earlier. I just think that if the assistant does not smooth it over in some way, if it is possible, then there is a certain barrier between the group*" (K55).

The described **determinants** are then reflected in the **coexistence and cooperation with peers**, which in the context of education were unique, but if it was part of life in the classroom, oscillated between two opposite poles: On the one hand mutual support and assistance occurred as a part of school work which, for example, Libor recalls as follows: *"Someone needed help, because they had a problem with some program, so everyone just sort of helped each other in general"* (L14). On the other hand, all participants that were confronted with indifference on the part of their classmates in the class and whose efforts at closer contact with peers were unsuccessful, reported by consensus that classmates expressed an interest in working together only if they had study problems and thereby utilized their preparedness for classes: "*But paradoxically, everyone came to me when they did not have their homework, because I always had it, so everyone wanted to copy it"* (K2) or *"someone would ask me if I could help someone with a task as it was some subject that I was doing better in at the time* " (S57). In connection with the above, the participants mentioned that they felt lonely or inferior in the class group, as Radka described as follows: *"So I felt inferior, if you take into account what age I was, when a person needs to have feedback to know that things are going properly and that they are not just doing everything from being forced to*" (R4). Tamara mentions completely divergent experiences and feelings, on account that the class group accepted her from the beginning: *"The first day: "Come with us" and the rest of the three years was a piece of cake. I had friends. "*

Not only these feelings, but also the relationships within the dyad of the integrated pupil - classmates had an impact on the social status of the participants within the **class stratification.** Based on the testimony of the participants we can say that they often perceive their social status in the class group ambiguously. Tamara somewhat uncertainly stated: *"I did not stand out nor was I completely ignored. I was not the center of attention ... I was the type of person who adapts; I mean I also had my own opinions, but I adapted to the others. They didn't push me away from them. They took me as normal, it was good*." (T5, T45, T46). Libor on the contrary, said that right from the beginning he was an equal member of the group, who was helped by the knowledge he possessed: *"I just found out that I was good at this and that. In that field. This is also related to the integration in the group, because thanks to that I was also needed in the group, I had my place, because whenever someone needed something, they could come to me and somehow we would just figure it out"* (L4). In contrast with that, Radka for example said that she had to fight for her place in the center of clasroom: *"I had to fight for my place, so others would start to respect me ... They helped me when I needed something, but otherwise I was just there if "they needed me", which was not very good" (R1).*

The data also showed that interpersonal relationships and emotions that were part of the **inner world of a pupil with a physical disability**, along with their status in the class group are closely linked to the **needs** which participants in the **secondary school environment consider to be significant**. At the same time, these can mainly be seen as the result of interpersonal relationships and coexistence in the social world of the school, because participants stated that they most intensively felt the need of belonging to the class group, the need to show that one is not "different" due to a physical disability and the need for equality and friendship: *"The primary thing and most important for me is a sense of belonging, to be a member of the group is everything, not only the fact that you are a member, if they need to copy something from you, but for every situation and in everything"* (K43)*,* furthermore *"but at the same time though, of course, I just wanted to show that I was capable and so on. Even in this condition*" (S75), or "*if you do not have a friend in school that you could say that you have such and such a problem for me was probably the worst though. So the need for closer contact with classmates"* (R21). However, from the testimony it is evident that these needs related to coexistence and relations with peers were not always sufficiently fulfilled, as a result of which especially the participants Kamila and Radka opted for a variety of **compensatory and defensive strategies**, before there was a gradual convergence with classmates. One of them was searching for faults in oneself, thus reducing the share of responsibility of classmates for the dysfunctional interpersonal relationships: *"For a long time I was looking for faults in myself. Then I started to internalize those feelings that the main fault was with me. They really do not want to talk to me, because they have some reason, and I then started to blame myself*" (K20).

Radka also expressed similar sentiments, coping with the disinterest of classmates by focusing her attention on study results and graduation: *"And when I felt like they weren't interested in me there, so I went to school just because I wanted to study, but it was not very pleasant for me"* (R4). Despite the above, however, a gradual convergence with classmates and the building of friendly relations in the class group occurred: *"Then all of a sudden they started to take me out more, more among themselves. I started to find out more about who I am, what I want, what I do not want, and it became more interconnected and it was great "* (R39).

It must be said that the emotional and social needs of graduates with physical disabilities should also be seen in the context of the ***dyad of the integrated pupil - teachers***, under which formal relations underwent a development and clashed between trust and understanding and disengagement on the part of teachers. Initially, these were characterized by mistrust in the study talents of pupils with disabilities. In the context of ***communication with teachers***, however, individuals with physical disabilities were also confronted with their unwillingness to accept the specific learning needs. Radka describes her experiences clearly: *"Our geography teacher could not understand why I could not do blank maps. So the experience was very, very negative throughout, because he somehow could not cope with it somehow, so he tried to turn it into a joke fun that I again could not manage to make a blank map and it was terribly humiliating to me. But ultimately he understood the situation, and did not let me flunk geography"* (R18). Kamila described a similar experience: *"And she just flatly said no, and refuted my claims, insisting that blank maps are essential for her and that I must be able to do them. And for the first five exams, when we had to create the blank maps, she gave me F's. Then she probably realized that it probably was not just nonsense, that it was probably true, because when she orally tested me or when we had a different type of test, the results were completely different"* (K6). In light of the above, the described situation could be attributed to the fact that the communication between pupils and their teachers, in some cases, took place indirectly through an assistant or educational advisor: *"When it was a teacher with whom I felt would take it better from the educational advisor, so I dealt with it through the educational advisor, when I felt that I could say it myself, so I dealt with the teacher myself"* (R46). Radka even said that her class teacher was not even interested in cementing the class group: *"The class teacher got involved as little as possible. So, he just did the bare essentials. I expected assistance from him regarding the establishment of contact with my classmates, but he did not do that. I do not blame him for it, but at that time it really bothered me"* (R50, R51).

In contrast to that for example Tamara said that her relations with the teachers were seamless from the beginning, but their overconfidence in her ability to study paradoxically became a cause of concern and distrust for her in herself: *"And I was afraid of German, because I knew that I always knew it, but I just had these weird feelings, that I was not as good as I wanted to be anymore and I felt stupid ... The teacher believed in me, that I was good, but then I really had trouble with it, and I felt really unsettled by that"* (T1, T4). The participants, however, despite the divergent experiences indicated that they relations with teachers were gradually stabilized and treated them in an equal manner: *"They treated me like everyone else. But they did not favor me. They treated me equally, like the others"* (T51). This simultaneously generated the need for justice on the part of the teachers: *"I certainly think that there was justice on the part of teachers toward me. They did not go easier on as far as grading went. I never felt that and I know it never occurred "* (K47).

6. Summary

This study focuses on the emotional and social needs of individually integrated pupils with physical disabilities in secondary schools. The fact that all of the quantitative inquiries carried out so far focused attention on a heterogeneous group of people with disabilities contributed to its selection, while emphasis was placed on the attitudes of the actors of education on school integration as a whole (Van Rausen, Shoho & Barker, 2000; Jones et al. 2002; Michalík, Kozáková & Růžička, 2004). Our intention, therefore, was to shift the state of knowledge in this area in the direction of the current trends, and for this purpose a qualitative research strategy was used.

The data showed that the emotional and social needs of graduates with physical disabilities are diverse, while a significant role in their fulfillment is played by both the dyad of a formal and informal character. Based on the testimony of the participants, it can be concluded that the common denominator for both dyads is a certain emotional and social development, which all the actors of education consisting of the triangle of the integrated pupil - intact classmates - and teachers went through, and which influenced the emotional and social needs of the

participants. From the beginning, mistrust and misunderstanding on the part of classmates and teachers usually came to the forefront, which, however, was affected by the absence of experience and information on how individuals with disabilities communicate, but at the same time an unwillingness to change the established system of education. Kamila perhaps summarized the root of the problem with the words "*old habits die hard*" (K32). Given the above, individuals with physical disabilities were confronted with two divergent approaches throughout secondary school, which, however, despite apparent differences, result in identical emotional experiences and social needs. On the one hand it was the ignorance and unwillingness of peers to cooperate within education, which projected into the status of the participants within the class group and took on a fringe or outsider form. It was also for this reason that the need for integrated pupils to show that they are not "different" because of their disability came to the forefront. The wish was demonstrated by a desire to participate in what is happening in the classroom, as the need for belonging and friendship was not sufficiently fulfilled. The intention of convergence was not supported by their peers, which in turn resulted in feelings of inferiority and loneliness. Our findings are thus consistent with the work of Lord et al. (1990) or Armstrong, Rosenbaum & King (1992), where they write that adolescents with physical disabilities, compared with their intact classmates at school, often feel lonely and isolated.

However, the data revealed that there was a gradual accommodation of the integrated pupils by classmates and teachers, with a key role played not only by the ability to express themselves, but also to show that a disability is only an imaginary barrier between the integrated individual, classmates and teachers. In such cases, life in the classroom was based on mutual aid and assistance, on understanding, but also an equal approach. These were then predictors of the fulfillment of the needs of justice, equality and friendship that the participants felt the most. At the same time they stated that due to the positive social relationships they felt in the center of events, which in turn has fulfilled the need of belonging to the class group. From this perspective, therefore, the findings of Carter, Spencer (2006), that individuals with disabilities compared with intact classmates are frequently bullied, while verbal aggression, threats and taunts come to the forefront, were not confirmed.

However, it must be said that despite the stated information, there were a number of weaknesses identified during the fulfillment of the emotional and social needs of pupilss with disabilities, which create room for improvement and recommendations. The data revealed that ignorance and a lack of preparation for the arrival of a pupil with physical disabilities dramatically intervened in the coexistence with both dyads, which was then projected into mutual communication. Equally problematic, however, appeared as the absence of participation of integrated pupils in school activities that were not strongly supported by the class teacher and that could contribute to the greater fulfillment of emotional and social needs. This thesis of ours was confirmed in the statement of Tamara, who considered her needs in the secondary school environment as sufficiently fulfilled and in her words it was especially the class teacher that was particularly responsible for this: *"And I think that the teacher is also responsible for this. She told them from the beginning, not to be afraid of me, that I'm normal, to get to know me, that they not be intimidated ... she told the others how they should treat me and what would not be appropriate*" (T5, T50). This statement is in line with the findings of Čada (2012), who states that a key role in the integration of individuals is played by the social psychological preparation of the classes and teachers for the arrival of pupils with disabilities. Equally important, however, is the subsequent work of the class teachers, who during educating should choose methods that involve all pupils in a variety of learning activities therefore enabling mutual cooperation to occur.

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