Defining Intellectual Disability by Teachers of Mainstream Schools as a Marker of their Competence in Special Education

Abstract

The study aims at the presentation and interpretation of the ways of defining disability by teachers from mainstream lower secondary schools. The definitions will be considered from the standpoint of both attitudes and competences and will be interpreted in the context of selected conditions of their constructing. This can become a starting point for a discussion on the whole concept of reforming the system of education for learners with special pedagogical needs in Poland.

The main theses are comprised in the statement that formulating pertinent (from the point of view of educational practice) definitions is associated with both the knowledge about disability, e.g., acquired in the course of university studies, and professional experience gained in contact with disabled learners. This thesis is verified by the research into:

1. the relation between defining and the number of pedagogy classes within the university curriculum (the examined teachers implemented syllabuses of various ranges) and

2. the relation between defining and the experience in teaching learners with mild intellectual disability (only part of the respondents have had previous contact with pupils with mild intellectual retardation).

Key words: intellectual disability, competences, reform of the education system.