

Social Skills as a Significant Aspect of a Successful Start of Compulsory Education

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Abstract : The issue of school maturity and readiness of a child for a successful start of compulsory education is one of the long-term monitored areas, especially in the context of education and psychology. In the context of the curricular reform in the Czech Republic, the issue has recently gained importance. Analyses of research in this area suggest a lack of a broader overview of indicators informing about the current level of children's school maturity and school readiness. Instead, various studies address partial issues. Between 2009 and 2013 a research study was performed at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc (Czech Republic) focusing on children's maturity and readiness for compulsory education. In this study, social skills were of marginal interest; the main focus was on the mental area. This previous research is smoothly linked with the present study, the objective of which is to identify the level of school maturity and school readiness in selected characteristics of social skills as part of the adaptation process after enrolment in compulsory education. In this context, the following research question has been formulated: During the process of adaptation to the school environment, which social skills are weakened? The method applied was observation, for the purposes of which the authors developed a research tool – record sheet with 11 items – social skills that a child should have by the end of preschool education. The items were assessed by first-grade teachers at the beginning of the school year. The degree of achievement and intensity of the skills were assessed for each child using an assessment scale. In the research, the authors monitored a total of three independent variables (gender, postponement of school attendance, participation in inclusive education). The effect of these independent variables was monitored using 11 dependent variables. These variables are represented by the results achieved in selected social skills. Statistical data processing was assisted by the Computer Centre of Palacký University Olomouc. Statistical calculations were performed using SPSS v. 12.0 for Windows and STATISTICA: StatSoft STATISTICA CR, Cz (software system for data analysis). The research sample comprised 115 children. In their paper, the authors present the results of the research and at the same time point to possible areas of further investigation. They also highlight possible risks associated with weakened social skills.

Keywords : compulsory education, curricular reform, educational diagnostics, pupil, school curriculum, school maturity, school readiness, social skills

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