

Abstract

The main research goal of this dissertation is to create a coherent and comprehensive description of theory and practice in the field of working with an autistic child at the preschool stage, integrating selected directive and non-directive theories.

The following dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the subject of autism, its classification and clinical picture. This thesis was written at the turn of 2021/2022, in anticipation of the implementation of the new ICD-11 classification in Poland, in which significant changes in the definition of this disorder have been introduced. From the educational point of view, a particularly important subsection in this part of the thesis is the formulation of the needs of an autistic child. The second chapter includes a description of the basic concepts and principles of behavioural therapy in working with children with autism, especially reducing unwanted behaviours, learning deficit skills and generalizing acquired skills. The behavioural theory is the theoretical basis of the presented SPRING® Method. As the dissertation presents a description of an attempt to integrate directive and non-directive approaches in the therapy and education of an autistic child, the third chapter is a presentation of non-directive methods of working with a child with autism, including Reggio Pedagogy, DIR FLOOR Method, Knills' Method, W. Sherborne's Method and Sensory Processing. Chapter four presents the theoretical assumptions of the educational and therapeutic method SPRING®, including therapeutic procedures, forms of work, the role of teachers and parents in the educational process, and the importance of the child's environment. Chapters five and six contain the methodological assumptions of the research and present the results with the reference to the development of social competences of autistic children and their empowerment.

The work is primarily of a practical nature; hence the last chapter of the dissertation includes pedagogical recommendations for kindergartens. Procedures designed specifically for the use of SPRING® method determine intervention strategies, realistic and specific goals and children's progress documentation. Without intervention in the education of children with autism at an early stage of preschooling, there is little chance of changing their social exclusion situation. The preschool age is a period of extraordinary curiosity about the world, great plasticity, time of searching for information about what is new and incomprehensible; that is why kindergarten is the best space for mixed education of children with autism and neurotypical peers in creating an inclusive culture.

The SPRING® method predisposes to become a theoretical foundation for proposed by the author gradual education, which integrates individual (segregated), integrative and inclusive education in the context of preschool education of a child with autism.