



SvedbergOpen
DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

International Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

Manipulative techniques as a factor influencing the implementation of inclusion in Slovak schools

¹Mariana Sirotová, ²Veronika Michvocíková

¹ University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Faculty of Arts, Department of Pedagogy. E-mail: mariana.sirotova@ucm.sk

² University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Faculty of Arts, Department of Pedagogy. E-mail: veronika.michvocikova@ucm.sk

Abstract

Inclusive education is not only a legislative obligation but also a growing trend in Slovakia. Its successful implementation is crucial for advancing social inclusion within our society. This paper examines the current state of inclusive education in Slovakia, highlighting its benefits, challenges, and risks. Special attention is paid to manipulative techniques that hinder the effective implementation of inclusion. The survey was conducted using a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with respondents from primary schools. We explored the attitudes of pupils, parents, teachers, and school management towards inclusive education. To enhance clarity, we complemented the qualitative analysis with basic quantitative data, presenting the frequency of responses in percentages. The findings suggest positive impacts of inclusive practices, such as increased empathy and social skills in neurotypical pupils, as well as improved self-esteem and a sense of belonging among pupils with special educational needs. However, several barriers were identified, including a lack of professional staff, insufficient resources, administrative burdens, and the use of manipulative techniques aimed at resisting inclusion. The paper concludes by identifying the most common manipulative strategies used by teachers to block the integration of inclusive education into current educational practices in Slovakia.

Keyword: barriers to inclusion, inclusive education, manipulative strategies, pupil, survey, teacher attitudes ¹

I. Introduction

Inclusive education is currently one of the key pillars of modern education and therefore needs to be analyzed in order to clarify how this concept is applied in the Slovak context. Inclusion is understood as a process that ensures equal educational opportunities for all pupils regardless of their individual needs, abilities, or social background [1]. Reflecting its international commitments, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Slovak Republic is gradually implementing the principles of inclusive education into national legislation and strategic documents [2]. In Slovakia, inclusive education is enshrined in legislation, primarily in Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act) [3], which guarantees every child the right to education without discrimination.

Given the need for active cooperation between all stakeholders – teachers, parents, pupils and wider society – we consider it essential to create an environment that promotes diversity and respects individual differences. Slovakia has adopted a number of strategic measures, including the Strategy for Inclusive Approach in Education and Training through the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic [4]. Despite the declared efforts, however, the implementation of inclusion in practice faces several obstacles. Among the most significant challenges are the lack of qualified professionals, limited financial resources, and persistent prejudices against pupils with special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as SEN).

In our survey, we examine the attitudes and experiences of pupils, parents, teachers, and school management through semi-structured interviews conducted at two primary schools. By analyzing the data obtained, we identify the benefits of inclusive education, its pitfalls, and manipulative techniques that hinder the implementation of inclusion.

II. PILOT SURVEY

The impetus for conducting the survey was the need to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of inclusive education in Slovakia, identify its benefits, and uncover the barriers that prevent its effective implementation.

The pilot survey in educational practice was carried out by Ing. Anna Bulková, a pupil at the Faculty of Education, UCM in Trnava, under the supervision of the lead author of this article. The aim of the survey was to identify specific positives and negatives of inclusive education in Slovak primary schools from the perspective of various actors – pupils, parents, teachers, and school management. The survey focused on:

- positives: examining the benefits of inclusion for pupils with SEN and intact pupils, such as better social interactions, increased self-confidence and greater tolerance,
- negatives: identifying obstacles to the implementation of inclusive principles, such as organizational problems, lack of professional capacity, financial constraints, and manipulative techniques. To achieve the main objective, several sub-objectives were defined, which elaborate on individual aspects of the issue under investigation:

1. analyze the perception of inclusive education by different groups
2. identify the main benefits and challenges of inclusive education for individual groups of actors and the school as a whole
3. examine the readiness of teachers and schools to implement inclusive education

4. evaluate the impact of inclusive education on the overall atmosphere and relationships in the classroom. Based on qualitative methodology, our survey aimed to comprehensively map the positions and experiences of various actors in inclusive education. We divided the survey questions into four thematic areas: the perspectives of actors, the benefits and challenges of inclusion, teacher readiness, and support for an inclusive environment. This division is based on a model that emphasizes the need for a systemic approach to the analysis of inclusive processes. When formulating the questions, we focused on three dimensions: objective (factual experiences), subjective (perceived benefits and barriers) and normative (suggestions for improvement) [5]. The following section provides an overview of the survey questions and their focus:

1. How do different groups of actors/respondents perceive inclusive education? Focus: Perspectives of pupils, parents, teachers, school management.
2. What are the significant benefits of inclusive education for pupils with SEN and for intact pupils from the perspective of different actors/respondents? Focus: Development of empathy, academic results.
3. What challenges and obstacles do teachers and school management encounter in implementing inclusive education? Focus: Lack of assistants, financial resources, legislative problems, manipulative techniques.
4. To what extent are current teachers prepared to work in an inclusive school and what are their needs in terms of further education? Focus: Methodological support, inclusive teaching strategies.
5. How does inclusive education affect the overall atmosphere and relationships in the classroom from the respondents' perspective? Focus: Improving the classroom climate, reducing bullying.
6. What support measures could improve the implementation of inclusive education? Focus: Material, personnel, professional, legislative proposals.
7. How do the needs and expectations of different groups of actors/respondents differ in relation to inclusive education in terms of academic performance and social development of pupils? Focus: Comparison of parental priorities with school goals.
8. What are the main differences in the implementation of inclusive education between two selected primary schools in Slovakia? Focus: Regional factors, school size, external cooperation.

We divided the survey questions into four main thematic areas with the following percentage representation: perspectives of actors (questions 1 and 7) – 25%, benefits and challenges of inclusion (questions 2 and 3) – 25%, teacher readiness (question 4) – 12.5%, and support for inclusion (questions 5, 6, and 8) – 37.5%.

Within the qualitative approach, we chose semi-structured interviews as the main method, as they allow us to delve deeper into the issue under investigation and capture the diverse views of respondents [6]. In order to capture non-verbal expressions and the authenticity of responses, we conducted interviews with 22 respondents from two primary schools, approaching pupils without disadvantages, pupils with SEN, parents, teachers and school management. The interview consisted of 14 main questions, which we arranged logically from a general understanding of inclusion to specific recommendations for its improvement. The questions were adapted to the type of respondent to make them understandable and relevant. We divided the interview into three stages: the first was an introduction to build trust and clarify the objectives of the survey; the second was the core stage, which involved an in-depth analysis of topics such as the implementation, benefits, and challenges of inclusion; and the third stage was the conclusion, which provided space for comments and reflections from the respondents. Semi-structured interview questions:

1. What does the term "inclusive education" mean to you?
2. How would you assess the readiness of your school and individual actors (teachers, pupils, parents) for inclusive education?
3. What changes have you noticed since the introduction of inclusive education in your school?
4. What positives do you see in inclusive education in your school for pupils with SEN and for pupils without SEN?

5. What challenges or obstacles do you encounter in relation to inclusive education?
6. How do you think inclusive education affects the overall atmosphere and relationships in the classroom/school?
7. What impact do you think inclusive education has on pupils' academic performance?
8. How does inclusive education affect social relationships between pupils?
9. How do you perceive cooperation between pupils, parents, and teachers in inclusive education?
10. Do you think the legislative framework (including the curriculum) is sufficiently adapted to the specific needs of pupils in inclusive education?
11. What specific support measures do you think could improve the quality of inclusive education in your school?
12. To what extent do you feel prepared to work in an inclusive school and what are your needs in terms of further training?
13. How do you think the needs and expectations of different groups of actors differ in relation to inclusive education?
14. What are your expectations for inclusive education in the future?

The following table shows the thematic breakdown of the interview questions and their percentage representation among the respondents.

I - Thematic breakdown of interview questions

<i>Thematic area</i>	<i>Number of questions</i>	<i>Percentage representation</i>
<i>General understanding and preparedness</i>	1., 2., 12., 14.	4/14 = 28,6 %
<i>Benefits and challenges</i>	3., 4., 5., 7.	4/14 = 28,6 %
<i>Social and relational aspects</i>	6., 8., 9., 13.	4/14 = 28,6 %
<i>Legislation and support measures</i>	10., 11.	2/14 = 14,2 %

This methodological choice enabled a comprehensive examination of inclusive education from the perspective of all actors, which contributes to the validity and depth of the pilot survey findings. Respondents were selected with the aim of capturing the views of all key actors in the inclusive education process. The interviews took place in various settings – in schools (classrooms, staff rooms, offices), in private (e.g., school management offices) and, if preferred by the respondents, online via video calls. This approach allowed us to maintain the naturalness and comfort of the respondents and to ensure the confidentiality of their answers.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the availability of the respondents and the depth of their answers. With the consent of the respondents, the interviews were recorded, transcribed for analysis, and securely deleted after processing. In conducting the survey, we strictly adhered to ethical principles: anonymity of respondents, voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw from the survey at any time.

The survey was conducted at two elementary schools in Slovakia. We selected the schools based on their experience with implementing inclusive education for pupils with SEN. This sample allowed us to capture diverse perspectives on the issue of inclusion in the school environment.

School A, located in an urban area, educates approximately 400 pupils aged 6 to 15. Based on inclusive values, it provides systematic support to pupils with SEN, including pupils with ADHD, learning disabilities, and autism. The teaching staff is supplemented by a special education teacher, a school psychologist, and teaching assistants.

School B, located in a rural area, has a smaller number of pupils (approximately 150) and focuses primarily on supporting children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, including marginalized Roma communities. As part of inclusive education, an interdisciplinary team of experts, including a social pedagogue and a speech therapist, works at the school.

The sample consisted of 11 respondents from each school, for a total of 22 respondents. The following groups of respondents were represented in equal numbers at each school:

- teaching staff: 2 secondary school teachers, 1 school principal, 1 deputy principal
- specialist staff: 1 school psychologist, 1 special education teacher
- parents: 1 parent of a pupil without special educational needs, 1 parent of a pupil with special educational needs,
- secondary school pupils: 1 pupil without special educational needs, 1 pupil with special educational needs,

- representative of the school founder: 1 representative of the municipal/city office.

The diversified sample allowed us to gain insights from multiple perspectives. Teaching staff provided information about their everyday practice and the challenges of implementing inclusion. Specialist staff explained the specifics of supporting pupils with SEN. Parents expressed their expectations and experiences with inclusive education. Pupils offered their views on the social and academic aspects of inclusion. The community representative contributed the perspective of local conditions and support options. By including schools from both urban and rural areas, we were able to compare differences in approaches to inclusive education. The urban school had better material and human resources, but faced higher expectations from parents. The rural school struggled with limited resources but benefited from closer ties to the community. We characterized the respondents according to age, gender, position (for adults) and grade (for pupils). An overview of this data is presented in the following table.

II - Demographic characteristics of respondents

<i>Group of respondents</i>	<i>Age (mean)</i>	<i>Sex (M/F)</i>
<i>Secondary primary school teacher</i>	35	2 M / 2 F
<i>Head of school</i>	50	1 M / 1 F
<i>Deputy head teacher</i>	45	2 M
<i>School psychologist</i>	40	2 F
<i>Special educator</i>	38	2 F
<i>Parent of an intact pupil</i>	42	1 M / 1 F
<i>Parent of a pupil with SEN</i>	39	1 M / 1 F
<i>Intact pupil</i>	12	1 M / 1 F
<i>Pupil with SEN</i>	13	1 M / 1 F
<i>Representative of the founder</i>	55	2 M

III. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings are presented according to the eight questions of the pilot survey. Each section contains a categorization of responses, a graphical representation, and an interpretation. To optimize and improve the informative value of our findings, we have supplemented the qualitative analysis with a percentage visualization of the respondents' statements.

1. How do different groups of actors/respondents (pupils without disadvantages, pupils with SEN, parents, teachers, school management) perceive inclusive education in selected primary schools? With this question, we looked at the attitudes and experiences of different groups of actors towards inclusive education, their expectations, and their real-life experiences with implementation. We were interested in whether there were significant differences in the perception of inclusion between different groups and what impact these differences had on the success of inclusive education. Based on the analysis of the interviews, we identified four main categories of perceptions of inclusive education:

- positive (e.g., "opportunity for all," "development of empathy," "natural environment for pupils with SEN"),
- neutral (e.g., "depends on the conditions," "not always easy"),
- negative (e.g., "lack of support," "concerns about lowering the level of teaching"),
- mixed (a combination of positives and challenges, e.g., "beneficial but difficult to implement").

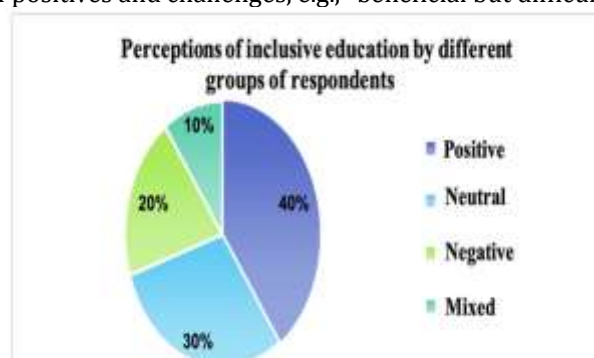


Chart 1: Perception of inclusive education by different groups of respondents

The analysis shows that approximately 40% of respondents perceive inclusive education positively, 30% neutrally, 20% negatively, and 10% expressed mixed attitudes. The most optimistic assessments were recorded among pupils with SEN and their parents, who appreciate the opportunity to remain in their natural environment and develop among their peers. Non-disabled pupils perceive inclusion as an opportunity to learn tolerance and cooperation. Teachers and school management are more cautious in their assessments, pointing to systemic and practical obstacles such as a lack of specialist staff, increased administrative burdens, and concerns about a slowdown in the pace of teaching. Given these differences, we can conclude that the success of inclusive education depends on the level of communication and cooperation between all stakeholders. Open dialogue and addressing specific concerns (particularly in the area of education quality and resource availability) are key to the effective implementation of inclusion.

2. What are the significant benefits of inclusive education for pupils with SEN and for pupils without SEN from the perspective of various stakeholders/respondents?

In this section, we focused on identifying the positive aspects of inclusive education for both groups of pupils – those with SEN and those without. We looked at the benefits perceived by individual groups of respondents and how these benefits differ across actors in the school environment. Based on the respondents' answers, we found that the perceived benefits for pupils with SEN and intact pupils partially overlap, but at the same time show specific accents according to the experiences and roles of individual actors. By analyzing the respondents' answers, we identified the following benefits:

- for pupils with SEN, respondents most often mentioned the development of self-confidence and a sense of acceptance in the group, the opportunity to remain in the local community, the development of social skills, and positive role models among peers; several emphasized that an inclusive environment allows pupils with SEN to progress according to their abilities, without stigmatization and isolation;
- According to respondents, the greatest benefit for non-disabled pupils is the development of empathy, tolerance, and the ability to cooperate with diverse classmates; they also mentioned a better understanding of diversity, the development of teamwork, and the ability to resolve conflicts in a heterogeneous group.

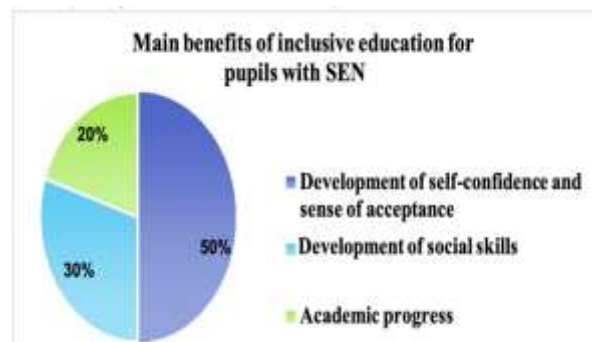


Chart 2a: Main benefits of inclusive education for pupils with SEN

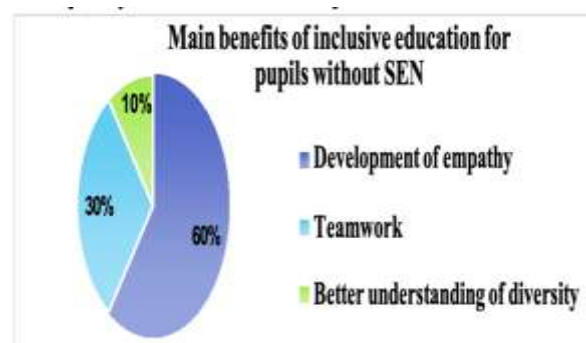


Chart 2b: Main benefits of inclusive education for pupils without SEN

For pupils with SEN, the most significant benefit is considered to be the development of self-confidence and a sense of acceptance (approximately 50% of responses), followed by the development of social skills (30%) and academic progress (20%). According to respondents, non-disabled pupils benefit most from the development of empathy (60%), teamwork (30%) and a better understanding of diversity (10%). Based on the responses of all stakeholders, we can conclude that the benefits of inclusive education are perceived primarily in the social sphere. For pupils with SEN, inclusion represents an opportunity to be part of a natural environment where they can develop their abilities. Non-disabled pupils gain valuable social skills.

Academic benefits are mentioned less often, which may reflect concerns about the quality of education or inadequate teaching methods.

3. What challenges and obstacles do teachers and school management face in implementing inclusive education?

In this section, we focused on identifying practical barriers that complicate the implementation of inclusive education in everyday school practice. We were interested in the specific obstacles perceived by teachers and school management, who are directly responsible for implementing inclusive approaches. Based on the respondents' answers, we distinguished three main categories of challenges: personnel, financial, and administrative.



Chart 3: Main challenges in implementing inclusive education

The results of the analysis show that the biggest obstacle to inclusive education is staffing challenges (60%), followed by financial constraints (25%) and administrative burdens (15%). Respondents repeatedly pointed to a lack of qualified professionals, especially teaching assistants and special education teachers. This problem is even more pronounced in smaller municipalities, where the availability of professionals is limited. Financial constraints and administrative burdens further complicate the situation—unstable, mostly project-based funding does not allow for long-term planning and systematic development of inclusive approaches. Teachers therefore often feel increased pressure and insufficient support, which can lead to burnout and a decline in the quality of education provided. In view of these findings, we can conclude that the successful implementation of inclusive education requires systematic support at all levels – from ensuring adequate staffing and stable funding to simplifying administrative processes.

4. To what extent are current teachers prepared to work in an inclusive school and what are their needs in terms of further education?

Based on respondents' answers to a question focusing on teachers' readiness to work in an inclusive school and their further training needs, we analyzed teachers' self-assessment as well as their expectations and preferences in terms of professional development. Recognizing the diversity of experiences and conditions in schools in Slovakia, we focused on how teachers reflect on their preparedness and which areas they consider key for further education.



Chart 4: Teachers' level of readiness for inclusive education

In their responses, respondents mostly identified themselves as partially ready to work in an inclusive school. Approximately 40% of teachers consider themselves prepared, 50% partially prepared, and 10% unprepared. This structure reflects not only the diversity of experience, but also differences in the availability of support and training opportunities in different regions and types of schools. Respondents repeatedly emphasize that they acquired theoretical knowledge about inclusion during their studies or training, but in practice they lack the ability to link this knowledge to real situations in the classroom. Teachers would welcome more practical training, lesson demonstrations, mentoring, and consultations with experts. They also need support in differentiating instruction, assessing pupils with SEN, managing challenging situations in the classroom, and communicating effectively with parents. The responses indicate that the greatest needs for further training include: practical methods of working with pupils with

different types of SEN, differentiated teaching and assessment, managing challenging situations in the classroom, cooperation with families and experts, and adapting the curriculum to the diverse needs of pupils. Teachers appreciate being able to share experiences with colleagues or receive feedback from more experienced colleagues or experts. Overall, it can be said that teachers' readiness for inclusive education is diverse and depends on personal experience, the availability of further education, and support at school. Most respondents see a need for further training, especially in practical areas that will help them better cope with everyday situations in an inclusive classroom.

5. How does inclusive education affect the overall atmosphere and relationships in the classroom from the respondents' perspective?

With this question, we focused on examining the social aspects of inclusive education and its impact on classroom dynamics. We were interested in whether they perceive positive changes in the classroom atmosphere or, conversely, identify negative impacts on relationships between pupils. Based on the analysis of the responses, we distinguished three main categories of the impact of inclusive education on the classroom atmosphere.

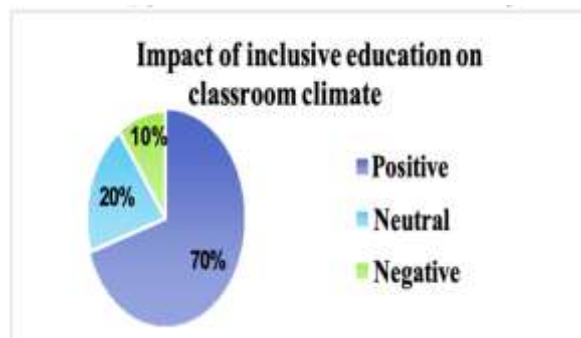


Chart 5: Impact of inclusive education on classroom atmosphere

The survey results show that 70% of respondents perceive the impact of inclusive education on classroom atmosphere as positive, 20% as neutral, and 10% as negative. The positive impact is most often associated with the development of mutual respect and tolerance (80%), a reduction in bullying (70%), a higher level of cooperation between pupils (65%) and a better understanding of diversity (60%). Neutral and negative perceptions are mainly associated with initial difficulties in adaptation (35%), insufficient preparation of the team to accept pupils with SEN (25%) and occasional tensions in the differentiation of tasks and assessment (20%). The responses indicate that inclusive education has a predominantly positive impact on the classroom atmosphere and promotes the development of pro-social behavior, empathy, and cooperation. However, these positive effects are not automatic – they require active work by teachers with the class, systematic building of an inclusive culture, and open communication about differences and the needs of pupils. In classrooms where teachers purposefully develop social-emotional learning and pay attention to group dynamics, the positive effects of inclusion are more pronounced. Negative effects are particularly evident where there is a lack of team preparation or support measures.

6. What specific support measures could, according to respondents, improve the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education at their school?

In this question, we focused on identifying specific measures that, according to respondents, could contribute to improving the implementation of inclusive education.

Based on their direct experience, we were particularly interested in practical suggestions that could be realistically implemented in the school environment. By analyzing the responses, we identified four main categories of support measures that respondents consider to be priorities.

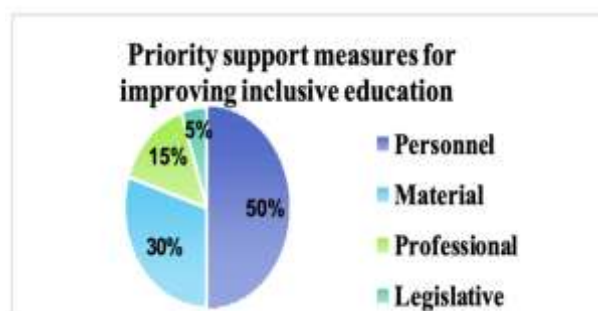


Chart 6: Priority support measures for improving inclusive education

The survey results show that respondents place the greatest emphasis on personnel measures (50%), followed by material (30%), professional (15%) and legislative measures (5%). Within human resources measures, the most frequently mentioned needs are to increase the number of teaching assistants (90%), ensure the permanent presence of special education teachers and psychologists (85%) and reduce the number of pupils in classes with integrated pupils (70%). Material measures include, in particular, the availability of special teaching and compensatory aids (80%), the adaptation of spaces for individual and group work (65%) and the use of modern technologies supporting inclusive education (60%). Professional measures include practical training for teachers (75%), regular supervision and mentoring (65%) and methodological materials for working with different types of SEN (60%). Legislative measures mainly concern simplifying the administration associated with integration (70%), more stable and transparent funding (65%) and a more flexible curriculum (55%). The responses show that respondents consider personnel measures to be the most important, especially increasing the number of professionals directly in schools. This emphasis on human resources suggests that successful inclusion is seen primarily as a question of quality professional support, not just material resources. Material measures are important, but they are seen more as a supplement to staffing. Professional and legislative measures create a framework that enables the effective implementation of inclusive approaches, but their importance is secondary in the eyes of respondents. Interestingly, legislative measures are not perceived as a major obstacle – respondents rather point to the need for better implementation of existing rules in practice.

7. How do the needs and expectations of different groups of actors/respondents differ in relation to inclusive education in terms of academic performance and social development of pupils?

In this question, we focused on identifying differences in the priorities and expectations of the various groups of actors involved in inclusive education. Our aim was to better understand the possible sources of tension or misunderstanding that may arise between pupils, parents, teachers, and school management. Based on an analysis of respondents' answers, we identified significant differences in the expectations and needs of these groups, which are often reflected in their everyday experiences with inclusion. The survey results show that parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) place the greatest emphasis on an individual approach and social inclusion for their children (70% of responses), while parents of intact pupils prefer maintaining academic standards (55% of responses). A closer look at the individual groups reveals the following specific priorities: pupils with SEN most appreciate acceptance and support within the group (90%), individual learning pace (80%) and positive feedback (75%). Non-disabled pupils prefer interesting and stimulating lessons (80%), space for personal development (70%) and fair assessment (65%). Parents of pupils with SEN expect an individual approach (85%), social acceptance (80%) and professional support (75%), while parents of pupils without SEN emphasize the quality of education (75%), preparation for further study (70%) and the development of social skills (55%). Teachers most often request methodological support and further training (85%), sufficient time for preparation (80%) and cooperation with experts (75%). School management considers stable funding (85%), qualified professional staff (80%) and clear legislative guidelines (75%) to be key. These findings show that there are significant differences in priorities and expectations between the different groups. Pupils with SEN and their parents place particular emphasis on social aspects and individual approach, while parents of pupils without SEN are more concerned about a possible decline in the quality of education. Teachers focus on the practical aspects of implementing inclusion and the need for professional support, while school management focuses on systemic and financial security. These different perspectives can be a source of tension and misunderstanding if they are not openly communicated and addressed within the school.

8. What are the main differences in the implementation and perception of inclusive education between the two selected primary schools in Slovakia?

In this section, we analyzed the differences in the implementation of inclusive education between a primary school in Bratislava and a primary school in a small village, focusing on the regional context and availability of resources. Our goal was to identify the main challenges and opportunities arising from the different conditions of both schools. Based on the respondents' answers, we divided the identified differences into four categories that reflect the main areas of disparity.

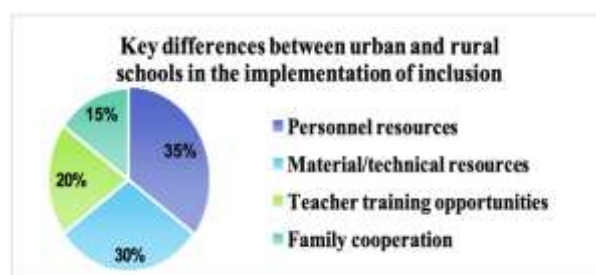


Chart 8: Key differences between urban and rural schools in the implementation of inclusion

An analysis of the survey findings shows that the most significant differences are in the availability of specialists, i.e. in staffing, which represents the largest difference (35%), as the Bratislava school has more specialists, which allows for better support for pupils with SEN; rural schools have the greatest reserves in this area. The second largest difference (30%) is in material and technical resources – the Bratislava school has better equipment and facilities, which facilitates inclusion. Another significant difference is access to teacher training (20%) – teachers in Bratislava have more opportunities for further training, which increases their readiness for inclusion. There is also a difference between primary schools in their cooperation with families (15%) – in rural areas, the advantage is a closer community, while in cities, the advantage is that parents are better informed. Based on the findings, it is clear that regional differences significantly affect the quality of inclusive education. Schools in Bratislava have the advantage of better access to professional and material resources, which can lead to uneven quality of education and create a "two-speed" system. Pupils in rural areas do not have the same opportunities as their peers in the capital. On the other hand, rural schools can use their personal knowledge of local conditions and closer community ties to mitigate some material disadvantages. The results of our analysis indicate the need for systemic measures to ensure equal access to professional services in less developed regions.

IV. MANIPULATIVE TECHNIQUES AS A BARRIER TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSION

In the context of inclusive education, manipulative techniques can be used by various actors – teachers, school management, parents, but also the pupils themselves. This is often an attempt to avoid change, take responsibility, or maintain a "comfort zone" in a traditionally established system. In addition to the above findings, we also identified the following manipulative techniques in our interviews that hinder the implementation of inclusion in education. We present them as examples of direct statements made by respondents. Due to the low number of occurrences, we did not calculate the basic frequency. Specific examples of manipulative techniques:

1. Emotional blackmail – using emotions, especially guilt, to discourage inclusive changes. Example of a respondent's statement (teacher to management or a colleague who promotes inclusion): "You know how much administration we have... And now individual approaches to each pupil? We can't cope..."
2. Downplaying the problem – trivializing the needs of the pupil or the principle of inclusion itself. Example of a respondent's statement (teacher): "He's just a little slower, no need to call it special needs right away." Or "We have worse cases in the class and no one is calling for an assistant!"
3. Gaslighting – a way of questioning the reality or experiences of another person (e.g., a pupil, parent). Example of a respondent's statement (teacher to the parent of a child with social problems): "Your daughter only thinks she's being excluded. The other children play with her, she just hasn't noticed."
4. Intimidation by expertise – pretending to be an expert in order to silence or discourage the opinions of others. Example of a respondent's statement (senior teacher on inclusive approach): "What you are proposing is not in line with pedagogical and psychological principles, believe me - I have been in education for 25 years."
5. Passing the buck – avoiding solving a problem by shifting responsibility to someone else. Example of a respondent's statement (school management on the need to adapt teaching for a pupil with a learning disability): "That should be dealt with by the counseling center. As a school, we don't have the authority to do that."
6. False empathy – An outwardly sympathetic attitude that actually prevents change. Example of a respondent's statement: "We would very much like to help, but because of these children, we have to maintain a certain standard. Otherwise, the quality of teaching for everyone else suffers."
7. Creating alliances/group pressure – using the opinion of the majority against the minority. Example of a respondent's statement (a teacher who does not want to implement inclusive measures): "None of us feel that we need to change our approach. It's just the ministry that keeps pushing for inclusion."

These techniques are not always consciously wrong or intentionally harmful – they are often defensive reactions to changes that are challenging and require support, time, and training. However, if manipulation is repeated or systematized, it hinders the development of an inclusive culture in schools.

V. Conclusions Of The Pilot Survey

Based on the analysis of respondents' answers, it can be concluded that there is a significant tension between the positive perception of the benefits of inclusion and the practical challenges that accompany its implementation. We have identified key factors for successful inclusion, including adequate staffing, systematic training of teachers to work in heterogeneous classes, and active communication between all stakeholders. In our analysis of respondents' answers, we found differences in the perception of inclusion between different groups of actors, as well as between schools in different regions. These differences indicate the need for a differentiated approach to the implementation of inclusive education. The social

benefits of inclusion are perceived as more significant than the academic ones, which underlines its importance in building a tolerant and inclusive society.

A survey of primary schools shows that inclusive education in Slovakia has several positive aspects, but also a number of problems:

- Positives: pupils with SEN feel accepted and can learn together with others; intact pupils learn tolerance, empathy, and cooperation; most parents and pupils perceive inclusion positively, mainly because of better relationships in the classroom.
- Negatives: teachers and school administrators often feel a lack of assistants, special education teachers, and school psychologists; some parents fear that the level of education will decline; there is also a lot of red tape and not enough funding for necessary aids and specialists; rural schools have fewer opportunities than schools in Bratislava.

In order to further develop inclusive education in Slovakia, it is essential to address the identified obstacles, in particular the lack of professional staff, unstable funding and administrative burdens. However, it is equally important to build a positive inclusive school culture and provide systematic training for all stakeholders.

References

- [1] K. Vančíková – B. Basarabová et al. 2022. "Mnohoraké podoby inkluzívnej školy alebo Predstavy o inkluzívnom vzdelávaní na Slovensku" (The Many Forms of Inclusive Schools or Ideas about Inclusive Education in Slovakia). EQUILIBRIA, s. r. o. Banská Bystrica: Belianum. Published by Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Education. 138 pp. 2022.
- [2] UN. 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/uvod/legislativa/socialna-pomoc-podpora/dohovor-osn-pravach-osob-so-zdravotnym-postihnutim-opcny-protokol-sk-aj.pdf>.
- [3] Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (School Act) and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended.
- [4] Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. 2021. Strategy for an inclusive approach in education and training. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/928/23120.ae7062.pdf>.
- [5] Švaříček, R., & Šedová, K., et al. "Kvalitatívny výskum v pedagogických viedach. Qualitative Research in Educational Sciences". Textbook published by Portál (Prague), second edition, 377 pp. 2014
- [6] Janíková, M.; Vlčková, K. et al. "Výzkum výuky: Tematické oblasti, výzkumné přístupy a metody. Research in teaching: thematic areas, research approaches and methods". Monograph published by Paido in Brno, 180 pp. 2009