

ADHD and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Questions about a sane society in which every individual could develop their potential and the role of education in its origin, are timeless questions, which are recently approached on an interdisciplinary level [1]. Sociologists such as Durkheim and Parsons believe that the education system transfers rules and values of a particular society on the individual, and theorists like Dewey and Illich criticize that the approach emphasizes the society and the individual thus becomes secondary. They see authoritativeness as the main feature of this model which results in conformity, social mimicry, loss of individuality, all forms of creativity and the increase of the number of different disorders, and an inadequate approach to disorders that are biologically conditioned [2].

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD is a neurodevelopmental and psychiatric disorder that affects children in their early age and it is not treated until adulthood [3]. Various studies tried to explain what causes ADHD and the consequences that the children, who suffer from ADHD have, meaning what kind of impact ADHD creates on children's lives, social life and school activities. Because of the difficulties in cognitive functioning, children in school have problems with paying attention which may result in their school performance in school grades; they may have problems with bullying and aggression [4]. However, not all children with ADHD are aggressive and not all of them have problems with being bullied or bullying someone, most children with ADHD aren't aggressive and violent and they avoid confrontations and they avoid violent environment [5]. Children with ADHD who are exposed to direct and indirect abuse, such as experiencing abuse at home may become abuse towards others. These studies are trying to explain different risk factors before pregnancy, during pregnancy and after birth. In various studies is mentioned epigenetic factors and impact on the development of a child's brain [6,7]. This disorder is inherited, which means that it "runs in the family", meaning that biological relatives of children with ADHD have this disorder. There are different studies on the incidence of the disorder; there is a big difference in the frequency, up to 26%, and the ratio between boys and girls is from 3:1, which is partly attributable to different diagnostic criteria [8]. Epigenetics investigates how the environment affects the genes [9], there are samples of evidence that the expression of genes in part are conditioned by the environment in which the organism develops the samples provided by Memišević and Sinanović, consisted of 167 children who are attending two special education facilities in Sarajevo. Overall occurrence of the disorder was found to be 20.4%, a finding which is in accordance with existing studies [10].

Given the large proportion of children with ADHD, it is necessary to approach this analysis with multiple levels. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with the lowest rate of economic growth and development of all the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Also, in this area of the Balkans, wars occur, on average, every 50 years what further complicates any improvement in the economic, scientific, and technological progress in general.

These circumstances greatly impede the development of natural human potentials and usually lead to different forms of disorders, as well as to social exclusion of people with congenital disorders. In order for a man to be productive in general and to act more inclusive, conditions in which people can be free, economically secure and which enables the creative use of skills are necessary [11].

In addition, biomedical and socioeconomic factors (poverty, neglect and / or abuse, wars) function as a threat to the aggravating factors on child development. Particularly adverse circumstances arise in cases of accumulating risk factors biomedical and social origin, such as insufficient education of mothers, unemployment, rent, abuse etc.

Apart from directly or indirectly affecting the development of a child, it also affects the education system. This kind of education system, affected with the mentioned hardships and lack of financial resources, which has no clear objective, easily accepts suggestions of foreign education systems, not taking the cultural differences and the absurdity of such a “strikethrough” into account.

ADHD affects every child who has biological relatives who has this disorder, and it may affect a child who comes from a wealthy family with educated parents and a child who comes from a poor family with non-educated parents. For example: Two 8 year - old boys from Slovenia, B.S. and S.M. are suffering from ADHD and they are attending a school for children with special needs. B.S. comes from a wealthy family, whose parents and other family members have different degrees and high positions in work and in society and S.M. comes from a poor family whose parents, have only elementary education. B.S. and S.M. have two things in common, they both suffer from ADHD, which they inherited from their relatives and even though that one comes from a rich family and the other one comes from a poor family, and both of them come from broken and abusive families, meaning they are exposed to direct and indirect abuse. Both of them have abusive parents who are “resolving” problems with using alcohol and drugs and being abusive towards each other and towards their children. Both of these boys are growing in this family and surrounded with violence and abuse, which caused them problems at school. Not only they have ADHD, but they also have problems with aggression and they use bad language and they are violent and abusive towards other, but mostly they abusive towards boys [12,13].

This again leads us to the conclusion that working with children with ADHD requires an individual approach and that the symptoms are not universal. Pedagogical standards in elementary schools allow enrolment of even three children with special needs in a class with 25 students. The greatest burden falls on teachers, who usually did not go through any additional training to work with children with disabilities, but have to deal with the given situation.

A full educational integration is achieved by involving students with mild disabilities in the class of elementary school from grade I to IV. Up to three students with disabilities can be included in a class that cannot have more than 25 students [14].

Furthermore, if there is suspicion that a student has a particular disability, but he/she did not go through the process of determining specific intellectual abilities, i.e., categorization, the teacher does not receive additional funding for their additional work. The student has the opportunity to attend classes with an individualized or customized program, or just a part of the program can be individualized or customized.

The law implies the enrollment of children with mild disabilities in schools, but in fact children with severe disabilities are also enrolled, just because the law is not clearly defined and it can be interpreted in different ways: Article 19 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina states: “Children and youth with special needs shall be educated in regular schools and according to their individual needs. An individual program adapted to their possibilities and abilities shall be made for each student and shall determine the status of each student in relation to special education and speech pathology. Children and youth with serious disorders and difficulties in the development may be educated in part or wholly at special educational facilities, where it is impossible to provide appropriate education in regular schools” [15].

The problem is that parents often do not want to see the potential difficulties of a child and often find themselves offended when they are advised with the categorization of students. They are afraid that attending classes with a customized curriculum means stigmatization and labeling of the child and that they were thus marked by life, as well that they will not be able to enroll the child in a preferred secondary school. The teacher is the one who mostly notices deviations compared to the average student and in the behavior of students.

In school, the child encounters new specific requirements, for example, sitting quietly, staying in a larger group of children, organized work with a beginning and an end. There is also a problem due to the education reform in which teachers have not participated. Nine-year basic education and inclusion have been introduced. Children start school at a younger age. It is more difficult to determine if the child is immature for school and if it will be able to adapt to a new way of functioning after a while, or that it really has certain deviations in the development. The teacher is the one, who must deal with the parents when noticing such deviations, and it is mostly not easy and it may undermine their cooperation. That the inclusion is still largely on paper, is also confirmed by the fact that schools should have a mobile team available, which is not actually formed, when they do not have secured their own team of experts who will support students, teachers and parents. ADHD, and other problems too, have not been observed nor treated on time, and the importance of an early intervention is often neglected. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina differs from municipality to municipality and even from school to school. There is no evident document that defines who should work with children with special needs and how they should work or who will be the one to bear the costs. In particular, in Mostar, assistants are paid by the parents of students. Those students usually did not undergo the categorization process and the assistants did not undergo a quality training program. The problems are piling up and they are swept under the rug. In the process of inclusion, which in our region is not what it is supposed to be, children with special needs enrolled in regular schools, as well as all other children that are in class with them, suffer the consequences. Specifically, if there is an assistant, there is no place that can be used for individual work with a child diagnosed with ADHD. There are no teaching materials that are needed. The most common advices are that children should sit in the front row, but it happens that it still does not follow the class. It turns back to the others and distracts them. Concentration is short-lived, and the lesson lasts 45 minutes.

Due to the mentioned situation, it seems that the path of self-realization is extremely difficult for hyperactive dreamers in most educational institutions in the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The question is; whether local leaders a politically state, local, entintetskih, county authorities, is thinking about what kind of future facts leaves children with mild or severe developmental disabilities.

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