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Internalisation of Disability as a Social Phenomenon in the Reality of Inclusive Education

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Abstract. Otherness of students that alters their aesthetical appearance, reduces physical abilities or limits cognitive potential may determine the difference in levels of individuals and different nature of interpersonal relationships. The research aimed at finding the answer to the question: What attitudes of educators and inclusively educated students result in internalised conception of disability as a social phenomenon?

Keywords: *disability, inclusive education, social conception of disability.*

Introduction

Marked with otherness, the disability phenomenon has been determining relations of the majority of society members with the disabled. The question regarding the role of a disabled person in society can be detected in ideas of Plato (Dumčius, 2014), Aristotle (1967) and other prominent ancient intellectuals as well as actions of politicians, educators, employers, family members and significant others directly engaged in development of interpersonal relationships of current times. During the development of the history of society, the relations shifted from complete negation of existence of people with disability (Morse, O'Brien, 1995; Albrecht, Seelman, Bury, 2001; Ruškus, 2002) to recognition of their equivalence (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The nature of social interaction particular to a person with a disability is determined by twofold conditions: 1) interpretation of the disability phenomenon postulated in society; 2) attitude of a person to effects of one's disability.

The current knowledge contains two key models for interpretation of the disability phenomenon. One of the first theoretical explanations relates the disability phenomenon with a personal health problem, biological bodily or mental changes that limit realisation of usual functions. Conceptualising the disability phenomenon in the medical paradigm, a person is perceived as a patient and one's wellbeing is placed into the scope of activity of medical staff (Thomas, 2004; Scullion, 2010). In this case, the level of function of a person in society is determined based on the health status, which actually ascertains the social status and position. The key decision-makers are medical professionals. Here, in terms of social role distribution, no significance is given to the opinion of a person with a disability. Substantiating the disability theory, M. Oliver (1984) used the term "personal tragedy", which reflects disability as a personal problem of an individual. L. Humpage (2007) related outcomes of Medical Model application for disability to entrenchment of the institutionalisation phenomenon in society. Industrialisation that postulates pro-ductivity of activities as the standard for the quality of life urges people with disabilities to create their separate space of life that fits their abilities. Conceptualised as a personal problem, disability becomes the basis for segregation. Such interpretation of the disability phenomenon degrades the self-esteem of a person, distorts the moral development of society and its interrelations. Emphasising otherness or justifying discrimination and segregation, disability has always been mostly accentuated among all subordinated groups of society in social history (Scullion, 2010; Fitch, 2009).

The World Health Organization broadened the discourse of the disability conception, taking it from the level of bodily functioning to dimensions of social action. A new concept "disability" was suggested to be used as an umbrella term expressing the multidimen-sional phenomenon that encompasses three interrelated elements: 1) bodily structure and functions, 2) activity on the personal level and 3) participation on the level of social relations. The quality of life of a person depends on the way these functional dimensions are impacted by a person's health and environment, in which one dwells together with surrounding people (ICIDH-2: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, 2001). This way a *social disability model* is built, the construct of which transfers the essential reference point from the personal problem, which is addressed using medical measures, to socio-cultural sphere of society. The disability phenomenon is no longer the object of medical activity alone, as it penetrates into areas of interests of history, literature, philosophy, social politics and education (Fitch, 2009; Taylor, 2011). Evaluation of the quality of life of a person was broadened to cover the total human functioning as it assesses health status, participation possibilities and the social context of the situation (Buntinx, Schalock, 2010). Social inclusion of people with a disability becomes the moral imperative of society. The concern for assurance of equivalence encourages to also consider other forms of circumstantial social "disability" resulting from wars, famines, insufficiency of resources, poor quality of medical care, incompetence and other negative social settings (Rembis, 2010). On the other hand, such wide discourse of the disability conception into

the social area of activity gives rise to theories that voice doubts regarding this excessive focus given by the social interpretation model for disability on the discriminatory effect of social barriers as well as abandonment of the bodily dimension – the possible cause of the low quality of life (Thomas, 2004; Viluckienė, 2008; Reindal, 2010). Social inclusion, which gives relevance to equal social participation of all people, unveils the variety of problems, obligations and commitments. L. Humpage (2007) stated that ever since Australia started basing the disability politics on social approach to this phenomenon, the number of people claiming support started growing as well as areas of life, in which society had to undertake the responsibility for the satisfaction of special needs. In the meantime, the country saw a significant growth in involvement of the number of people with disabilities involved in the open or adjusted labour markets.

Participation of people with different abilities in common activities brings relevance to the personal relationship with a group and self as well as encourages to rethink one's personal identity. L. N. S. Bampi, D. Guilhem, E. D. Alves (2010) stated that identification of personal differences and their perception in a community, enhance social and psychological position of a person as a community member as well as strengthen concerns to provide one with required support. A person with a disability feels as a part of the community, while on the other hand, one still perceives self in the role of a disabled. Disability researchers E. S. Green (2007), L. N. S. Bampi, D. Guilhem, E. D. Alves (2010) noticed that in the context of interpersonal relationships, a person with a disability may frequently undergo stigmatisation experiences and sometimes such feelings are particular by families with disabled members or communities of the disabled. It is obvious that interpersonal interaction that constructs social relations brings relevance to dignity or humiliation experiences encountered by a person with a disability. Criteria defining the sense of dignity experienced by a person with a disability may differ from those used for people without disabilities (Mažeikienė, Ruškė, 2011). Participation of the disabled in all situations of life enriches society and makes it better; however, the development of social climate that would be friendly to everyone requires to understand interpersonal relation processes and their impact on the emotional state of individuals and their groups, freedom of participation and self-actualisation. This way mechanisms for harmonisation of social relations bring relevance to the need for assurance of equal opportunities. Each person has to have equal access to welfare, social services and the possibility to realise one's potential (Terzi, 2010). At the same time, each person is responsible for the realisation of welfare and equal opportunities for self and other members of the community. This is especially relevant in education, where common activities involve students with different abilities.

The historical development of the social status of people with disabilities and scientific research on the disability phenomenon unveil an especially significant transformation of social systems and interpersonal commitments. Yet it is still important to understand the processes that occur inside heterogeneous communities. This research was constructed acknowledging that interpretations of disability as a social phenomenon are formed by

social experiences encountered in the situation of bodily discomfort. Interpretation of the multidimensional social disability model especially accentuates discussions on ethics and morals as well as the sense of dignity and wholesome existence.

Conceptual framework

This research defines the conception of disability as a social phenomenon based on three aspects: 1) recognition of a person's otherness as a factor that has impact on interpersonal relationships (Green, 2007; Norwich, 2009); 2) expression of social participation as a realisation of equal opportunities (Terzi, 2010; Gevorgianienė, Galkienė, Grincevičienė, 2008); 3) accentuation of dignity – ethical imperative of inclusive education – of a person with a disability (Fitch, 2009).

The first aspect. In the understanding of students without disabilities, the image of dignity of a person with a disability is formed during every day school activities. Observing experiences of their peers with disabilities as well as their emotional response to situations, students get to know the internal world of the disabled. Acting together and providing support, they also send an emotional response toward experiences of peers. This way, ethical and moral norms are formed in the interpersonal interaction, leading toward perception of personal dignity. Interpretations of students without disability stemming from their reflections of real experience related to dignity of peers with disabilities, allows us to understand the distinctive features of moral imperative expression and its internalisation in the social conception of disability.

The second aspect. Acceptance of a person's otherness and understanding of its effects is significant to both groups of students, i.e. those with a disability and those without it. It impacts on the self-perception of a student with a disability as well as interpersonal relationships between both groups of students. Acceptance of a student's otherness is also significant for professional decisions of a teacher that lead students towards the understanding of social processes. Reflections and situation interpretations of both groups – teachers and students – reveal the dimension of interpersonal interaction in the social conception of disability.

The third aspect. Expression of participation in social processes, which embodies realisation of equal opportunities. Perception of own roles in society among students with disabilities either promotes or inhibits their motivation to participate and act. Understanding of disability among students without disability as well as the stance on the development of an open environment for their participation, reveals the third dimension of the social concept of disability. A positive causal attribution by teachers strengthens the image of a student with a disability as an active participant as well as draws boundaries for the construct of the social concept of disability.

Expression of attitudes of inclusively educated students in these three dimensions allows revealing the developing perception of disability as a social phenomenon as well as its internalisation aspects.

Research methodology. The research is based on the single-case research strategy, using the qualitative meta-analysis method. Data of four qualitative studies undertaken in the period 2009–2013 in a school that implements inclusive education was combined to achieve greater reliability and conceptuality of results. The used strategy is based on the ideas of Martin Haidegger (1889–1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) on cognition of the relationship between a person and existence, suggesting that in getting to know the cultural and social context, to which one is closely related, a person also gets to know one's self.

Research aim – to reveal aspects particular to internalisation of disability as a social phenomenon among inclusively educated students.

Problem question for the research: *What attitudes of educators and inclusively educated students result in internalised perception of disability as a social phenomenon?*

Primary studies. Data of four following studies is combined: 1) Nurturing a Person's Equal Value as a Precondition for Dignified Personality Education (2009); 2) Harmonious Society Development Phenomenon in the Perception of Youth Growing in the Independent Lithuania (2012); 3) Phenomenon of Otherness in the Experience of Pupils with Disabilities Learning under the Conditions of Inclusive Education (2013); 4) Professional Identity Characteristics of a Teacher Implementing Inclusive Education: Pupil and Teacher Experience (2013).

Primary data collection methods: the method of unfinished sentences — to evaluate the dignity perception of a person with a disability; essay – to investigate otherness and the perception of harmony in society; individual in-depth interview – to reveal the professional identity perception of a teacher.

Execution of qualitative meta-analysis. The research data analysis was made using the descriptive – interpretive framework (Timulak, Creaner, 2013). Data of analysed studies was combined in stages: step one – analysis of primary research data and conclusions in connection to the research question; step two – regrouping of primary research data into analysed areas; step three – data categorisation into dimensions of attribute expression, topics and subtopics in connection to the phenomenon under analysis; step four – abstraction of research results identifying the essential direction of expression of the phenomenon under analysis. Consolidation of the research problem-field resulted in three attribute expression dimensions: 1) perception of bodily otherness as a factor impacting on social interaction; 2) accentuation of dignity of a person with a disability as an ethical imperative of social interaction; 3) expression of realisation of equal opportunities in social processes.

Reliability criteria of research results: 1) studies selected for qualitative meta-analysis had been conducted in a five year period; 2) analysis focuses on attitudes of three groups

of informants – students with disabilities, students without disabilities and teachers working under the conditions of inclusive education; 3) the author of all studies consolidated in this article cooperated with the school community to design the school model as well as investigated the processes involved. This way the research interpretations are also considered in the context of the researcher's experience gained in this community.

Description of the case under investigation. In 1993, soon after Lithuania regained its independence, educators with the help of parents established a school for inclusive education. It was a completely new phenomenon in Lithuania, which began the transition from the strictly segregated system of education for students with disabilities to the one that was open to all students. Consistent scientific research conducted in the school aimed at creating a model of education, which served for modelling and legitimation of inclusive education in the education system of Lithuania.

580 students from 7 to 18 years of age currently attend the school under analysis. Up to 25 percent of the student community members have special education needs due to mobility, visual and hearing impairments, learning disabilities and mild mental retardation. These students are educated in regular classes together with students without disabilities. Class communities have up to 28 students in total, with 5–6 special needs students in each. The education system of the school had the following fundamental dimensions: 1) individualised curriculum on the basis of needs; 2) harmonised common activities of students with different abilities; 3) social interaction in the community based on anthropocentric values (tolerance and respect).

Analysis of research results

Otherness that alters aesthetical appearance of a person or reduces one's bodily abilities has impact on the reality of everyday life and inevitably determines a distinctive interpersonal interaction. Subjective experiences that are reflected in interpersonal relationships are one of the dimensions that create the social reality of a community. Multiple dimensions of disability interpretations may determine the difference in levels of self-actualisation of individuals as well as different nature of interpersonal relationships among individuals. On the level of society, models for treatment of interpersonal relationships, developing in the situation of a disability, are reflected in the system of social politics; and on the level of a school – in community relations that determine the wellbeing of each individual.

Combining the data, tables provide examples of respondent approaches to the phenomenon under analysis, which are consolidated into subtopics, structured topics and attribute expression dimensions.

DIMENSION 1. *Perception of bodily otherness as a factor affecting social interaction*

Students with a mobility or learning disability constantly face outcomes of bodily discomfort in their daily lives. The aim is to ascertain which context of human functioning area dominates the contemplation on such difficulties: health as the sense of well-being, strength, freedom and movement or social relations as the prerequisite for freedom to act in a community, success and confidence.

The study results show that in deliberations of students with disabilities, the problem of bodily discomfort is clearly perceived and discussed. Their attitudes reflect two types of difficulties: limitation of mobility with related effects and learning failures. Conceptualised attitudes of students in respect of these difficulties reveal two key topics.

Topic. Real perception of bodily discomfort in social interaction. Students mention difficulties they face in relation to their disability, specifically underlining otherness in terms of mobility, perception of subjects and appearance. Interestingly, all failures are transposed to the social context. Such difficulties as pain, shortness of breath, abdominal discomfort or similar body function disorders did not stand out in contemplations of children at all. They compare their activity results with those of students without disabilities "*we can't keep up, look different, etc.*" However, there is no hopelessness in their attitudes; to the contrary, the emphasis is placed on the aim to reduce effects of bodily discomfort with the help of sports, exercise, etc. Learning under conditions of inclusive education and having an example of a regular human functioning, they want to strive for a higher result. However, it is obvious that they perceive and accept their real situation.

Topic. Acceptance of disability as a personal trait in the social context. Deliberations of students accentuate uniqueness of a person, there is a clear attitude that it should be recognised as a natural part of human self. Still, it isn't easy to internalise such an attitude because a disability usually determines differences that do not correspond to commonly accepted standards of beauty or intelligence. Students perceive this very clearly and underline the need to accept their uniqueness as well as love themselves the way they are "*a person should not hate one's uniqueness, most importantly, one should love oneself*". Developing attitudes of students toward self are based on dual treatment of observed real-life situations. In some cases, they underline difficulties that usually need to be simply endured; and in other cases, disability is viewed as a possibility to have certain privileges. However, relevance is underlined in both groups of cases as a condition for achieving wanted goals.

For students without a disability, otherness of their peers is obvious. Its effects are inevitably felt in social interaction. Analysis of interpretations by students without disabilities on conditions, under which equality can be felt by students who are unable to walk or have learning difficulties, aim to disclose treatments of bodily discomfort in attitudes of such students. Interestingly, although the study made a direct reference to bodily otherness (of students who are unable to walk) and the level of intellectual func-

tioning (in students with learning difficulties), facts of bodily otherness were secondary in deliberations of students.

Topic. ***Acceptance of bodily otherness as a reality of life***. One topic was distinguished in the deliberations of students without disabilities. These students clearly perceive the otherness of their friends, see it and treat it with understanding of their situation. They tend to refrain from emphasizing such difficulties and focus on underlining strengths of their friends. In attitudes of students without disabilities, sensitivity toward a situation of another person can be clearly observed as well as a higher level of empathy. It is evident that students without disabilities treat the disability phenomenon on the level of social interaction, placing no emphasis on differences of bodily functioning. It is important to mention that in attitudes of students, otherness of their friends is treated as a normal phenomenon of life that brings certain difficulties.

Just as in case with students without disabilities, reflections on long years of work experience acquired by teachers educating heterogeneous groups of students contained very few thoughts reflecting aspects of bodily otherness.

Topic. Otherness as the basis for student diversity. Biologic differences in these deliberations are only implied "<…> *everyone cannot be the same*". Undoubtedly, causes of diversity have a biological basis; however, teachers focus on effects rather than causes. Deliberations of teachers show that student otherness is accepted by them as a natural reality of education, which needs to be recognised. Awareness aims accentuate the social sphere, especially education "*it is important to know special needs in order to pay attention to distinctive attributes of a student*". Effects of physical disability of a student are perceived by a teacher as a part of the social construct. This understanding affects professional decisions yet does not lead into interpretations of medical reasons.

Disability as a cause of bodily discomfort becomes more evident in the deliberations of students with disabilities. These children feel certain differences in bodily functions, yet discuss them in the context of social interaction. Teachers and peers without disabilities do not directly accentuate bodily discomforts of such students. In their contemplation, only social effects of this phenomenon are given relevance.

DIMENSION 2. *Accentuation of dignity – ethical imperative of social interaction – of a person with a disability*

Recognition and fostering of one's dignity and that of others is one of conditions for a successful social reality. A person who's life is based on the attitude of dignity, recognises one's worthiness, tries to act honourably in respect to society and – according to Immanuel Kant (1980) – never regards another person as a tool for reaching one's objectives, but always treats others as objectives and the last argument in decision-making. Disability creates situations that require exceptional sensitivity in fostering dignity of a disabled person as sometimes an aspiration to act honourably may bring opposite effects, i.e. offend a person's dignity. For example, untimely or inappropriate offer to help as well as

determination to refrain from accentuating the unique situation of a person and failure to offer help when needed.

Deliberations of students with disabilities on the topic of otherness of a person reveal the treatment of the sense of dignity.

Summarising thoughts of students, two topics can be spotlighted as they reveal experiences related to personal dignity as ethical imperative in social interaction.

Topic. Recognition of inborn and acquired worthiness. Attitudes of students with disabilities very clearly reveal the sense of own worth. Contemplating the problem of bodily otherness, students with disabilities dwell upon existence, clearly accentuating the equivalence of human essence "*We are also people, no less than the healthy*". These contemplations lead to the fundamental acknowledgement of own worth, relinquishing the stigmatising sense of bodily otherness. As for students learning under conditions of inclusive education, their contemplations are grounded on constant comparison between their own existence and that of a disabled person's, which serves as a certain reference point or implied standard. Students with disabilities who acknowledge and attribute to themselves the inborn imperative of equivalence of human essence, also recognise advantageous personal traits determined by a disability and significant for social interaction. In their opinion, people with a disability are much more sensitive towards difficulties experienced by others, open and delicate in interactions with others. Therefore, in terms of social interaction, a disability is not limited to a restricting role as personal traits acquired in its context may profoundly enrich interpersonal relationships. Students also emphasize that a disability only restricts certain bodily functions but a person can make use of other opportunities and enrich the experience of society with their abilities. Students clearly accentuate individuality of people. Otherness determined by a disability is attributed to the general diversity of people "*All of us are as different as colours. Each is unique, exceptional and interesting*". This uniqueness is underlined by students engaging in transcendental senses, this way emphasising the greater amplitude of human differences and sameness of their nature "*All of us have a mission given to us by God. This is what makes us special*".

Topic. Accentuating the fundamentals of values in interpersonal relationships. Deliberations of students with disabilities clearly reflect a dignified poise in society, which testifies about the internalisation of the disability concept in their worldview. Successful assumptions of this process are related by students to the fundament of postulated and fostered values in interpersonal relationships. Tolerance and respect are at the top of the value hierarchy "*myself, as a disabled person, I never felt lack of tolerance*", "*I was never insulted or bullied*". However, they relate the sustainability of postulated values – which serve as a basis for interpersonal relationships – to strengthening of the clear fundament of values in a community.

Contemplations of students with disabilities reflect efforts to identify the meaningfulness of their existence with self-respect and senses of existence particular to the

majority of people. Learning under conditions of inclusive education, students facing effects of disability evidently experience the sense of dignity. Their attitudes reveal that their disability does not diminish their self-respect and even encourages to contemplate the meaning of life.

In attitudes of students without a disability, there is a vividly detected sense of the problem related to fostering equivalence of peers with disabilities. In addition, they reveal conditions, under which the sense of dignity is experienced.

Topic. Interaction created under equal partnership. In contemplations regarding occasions when their peers with disabilities feel equal with others, students without a disability demonstrate a clear reflection of conscious efforts to create an equivalent relationship "*does not demonstrate own superiority over them*". Students observing activities of peers with disabilities and experiencing successes and failures together, feel and accurately respond to their high aspirations "*<…> I respect their opinion*". This way the interaction develops on the basis of interpersonal understanding, stepping over experiences of bodily limitations. Physical appearance or bodily abilities are no longer the basis for togetherness as greater emphasis is placed on internal attitudes, experiences and the level of extraversion "*<…> interaction with them means looking at their heart, not their appearance*". Research results demonstrate that students without disabilities are sufficiently sensitive toward behaviour of others with their disabled peers. They are especially attentive to behaviour of teachers and learn from it. Students place special importance on the position of teachers to refrain from distinguishing between peers with disabilities and other students as well as recognition of their worthiness in simple everyday relations by talking and involvement in activities "*<…> talk with them as with healthy normal children*". Sensitivity of students toward behaviour of teachers is revealed by such observations as: "*<…> do that because they are equal with others rather than out of pity*". In social treatment of disability, compassion is a very important and controversial dimension. The bodily dimension of disability naturally instigates compassion and the social one ignores it. Observing their peers, students understand that demonstrating compassion creates an unequal interpersonal relationships and frequently causes experiences of humiliation.

Topic. Fostering dignity in interpersonal relationships by ignoring effects of a disability. Efforts to refrain from demonstrating compassion in the behaviour of students without a disability grow into conscious ignoring of the fact of bodily otherness in interpersonal relationships. Students try not to pay attention, refrain from putting emphasis on the disability fact and interact with disabled peers in the same way as with students without a disability. Such equivalence-based interaction spanning across participation in formal and non-formal activities provides an opportunity for students with disabilities to avoid the need to focus on their bodily disability and feel dignified as well as set their goals high.

Attitudes of teachers implementing inclusive education as well as their position regarding students with disabilities help children to understand situations of social interaction

and develop an understanding of the disability phenomenon. On the other hand, student disabilities that limit possible activities and create the need to differentiate curriculum as well as coordinate roles of students with different capabilities in common activity and regulate interpersonal relationships, develop attitudes of the teacher toward the disability phenomenon. Attitudes that promote students with disabilities to experience dignity are evident in contemplations on professional activity of teachers.

Topic. Pedagogic interplay that promotes students to experience dignity. The deliberations of teachers especially vividly emphasise the value-based professional activity. Special attention is given to three fundamental values that substantiate the boundaries of professional identity of a teacher: loving a child; respecting a child; and compassion. Teachers underline love as the core value. It is important to note that in attitudes of a teacher working under conditions of inclusive education, indirect allusions are made to wellbeing of children "<…> *You need to love children, all children, this is the most important"*. On the level of values, accentuation of equal worthiness of each and every student leads to recognition of bodily differences and dominance of the human essence in social interaction. Special emphasis is placed on respect of students with special needs, which is particular to teachers and creates social interaction based on trust. Compassion as a value thrives in this relationship between teachers and special needs students. In attitudes of teachers, a clear emphasis is placed on its fostering dignity dimension. This value in teacher attitudes obviously defines boundaries that cannot be crossed. Once they are crossed, effects of bodily disability start limiting activeness of a student in social interaction, i.e. impede learning activity. In this relationship, teacher abilities to manage one's feelings become apparent. Disability effects promote sympathy; however, inappropriately expressed, this feeling can offend dignity of students. Therefore, teachers believe in importance of empathy, the ability to understand the situation of a student at the same time managing their feelings and making a positive impact on social interaction by fostering self-esteem of students. Expressed in practical terms, teachers believe in creating a learning environment, in which a student is not singled out from the group and feels able to fully participate and be proud of one self. Teachers believe that this can be achieved when requirements of teachers correspond to the students' real abilities.

Insights made by teachers clearly reflect observations of students without disabilities. Development of an equivalent relationship in interpersonal interaction and avoidance to demonstrate pity are the aspects emphasised by students and teachers.

DIMENSION 3. *Expression of realisation of equal opportunities in social processes*

The third dimension of the perception of disability as a social phenomenon is realisation of equal opportunities. In social interaction, a person with a disability faces barriers that may be determined by one's limited bodily functions and/or manifestations of social discrimination. Consolidation of research data aimed to reveal barriers that are accentuated more as well as measures taken to overcome social barriers. Attitudes of the

students with disabilities that are developing based on their everyday life experiences, reveal real experiences related to realisation of equal opportunities.

Topic. Barriers for social interaction and related coping methods. Deliberations of students with disabilities reveal situations when they have to encounter barriers and certain signs of discrimination. According to research results, all difficulties emphasised by students are related to social situations (ignoring, avoiding, fearing). Experiences of social discrimination has a clear implication in the development of the disability perception among students. Students do not keep quiet about difficulties they encounter in their relationships and even express the desire to overcome such barriers. As students with disabilities believe, there are various possible methods available but they are always related to social interaction: withdraw and calm down *"rapping"*; fight for a possibility to show their completeness *"I have to be successful in learning, understand friends, teachers and loved ones"*; wait expecting that people will understand their situation and reduce the social tension *"People should understand how difficult it is to overcome own disability and how hard it is to fit in with regular people"*. Even in cases when social barriers are overpowering and students feel unappreciated or alienated, their insights reach beyond the closest margin of the social environment, covering a wider social context and expressing their attitude to ignore difficulties by emphasising the beauty of life *"to simply be happy with what they have"*. However, this is not the main attitude in striving for equal participation in social interaction. Contemplations of students reveal expectations in relation to the perspective of interpersonal relationships. It should be underlined: this perspective is the only one, in which greater emphasis is placed on biological differences as barriers *"<…> wouldn't pay any attention to my disability and treat me as someone with whom it is fun to be"* as expectations on the level of interpersonal relationships reach the highest level of goals *"I would like to have more true friends"*. On the basis of personal experiences, students with disabilities suggest specific measures for realisation of equal opportunities.

Topic. Participation in open society as the condition for realisation of equal opportunities. In terms of realisation of equal opportunities, deliberations of students reveal an especially clear attitude to recognise the importance of participation of people with disabilities in an open society. Basing on their personal experience, they particularly accentuate schools implementing inclusive education as the key condition for the development of national wellbeing, the fundamental value of which is tolerance and the basis is educated people. As a priority of social interaction in a school-setting, students put emphasis on values of trust and tolerance for otherness as measures for coping with psychological barriers and guarantee for good emotional well-being. According to students with disabilities, participation of the disabled in open society should not be limited to a school. It is important to eliminate barriers in the entire surrounding environment of a person, so that people with disabilities could equally participate in social life.

These observations made by students with disabilities are also reflected in attitudes of students without disabilities, which is the result of their reflection on personal experience.

Contemplations of students without disabilities participating in inclusive education reveal one topic related to the problem pertaining to realisation of equal opportunities for the disabled.

Topic. Cognition as the prerequisite for realisation of equal relations. In discussions about their experiences, these students draw the attention to the importance of better cognition of the disability phenomenon for realisation of equal relations. Their deliberations clearly manifest the acknowledgement that external expression of a disability (appearance, strange behaviour) may sometimes seem disturbing to people and give rise to negative stereotypes that impede the development of corresponding social interaction. It is of utmost importance that students participating in inclusive education discover this truth themselves *"<…> listening to them and talking to them, now I feel much easier"* and discuss a possibility of breaking stereotypes in the wider social context on the basis of this experience *"<…> I would like them to interact with people who have different abilities"*. In the opinion of students, interpersonal cognition requires targeted efforts; however, it is important for society to make such efforts in the name of equal relations of all its members. Interestingly, these insights of students without disabilities reflect real experience of students with disabilities. This way, real perception of the disability phenomenon develops in both groups of students.

A teacher as a participant of a pedagogical interplay has a very important role in the development of conditions for implementation of equal opportunities of all students.

Teachers have a direct role in realising equal opportunities of students with disabilities. Acting in student groups, they develop conditions for equivalent action and prerequisites for formation of certain attitudes.

Topic. Organising a pedagogical process that ensures equal opportunities. Consolidated reflection of teacher experiences unveils evident efforts to organise the process of education in the way that would make participation possible for all students who would feel as equal partners. Just the same way as students, teachers emphasise targeted efforts related to cognition of person's individuality *"willingness to get to know another person"*. However, a teacher does not relate child cognition objectives with development of interpersonal relationships alone. Good knowledge of a student's individuality helps a teacher to base the process of education on needs and abilities of a student. This way, creating prerequisites for a child to take indirect leadership in one's own process of education *"Everything has to take its natural course. You see a child and know how to behave"*. Getting to know a student, a teacher marks the boundaries of student's participation in the process of education, justifying a certain amplitude of deviation from regular requirements *"not to punish for something they can't do"* yet safeguarding a clear limit of permissible deviation *"<…> shouldn't be catching fish for them…"*. A rational limit to individualised education is also marked to a teacher by the context of the entire class, to which a student belongs. This is one of conditions for equal participation in an open system of education. A teacher sees the class as a whole and each child separately. Every-

one is given tasks in accordance with their individual abilities, creating the environment for common activity. Aiming for equal participation of students, a teacher consistently plans the success of each student *"it needs to be interesting for everyone"* and creates conditions by targeted planning of the course of a lesson *"<…> a plan providing each step of a lesson"*. Contemplation and planning of the success of each student requires to allocate time specifically for that purpose and, therefore, a teacher needs to have sufficient time. Analysis of research data spotlights yet another group of attributes that testify about the effect of the disability phenomenon on improvement of a teacher.

Topic. **Continuous professional quests of a teacher is the prerequisite for realisation of equal opportunities**. Educated under conditions of inclusive education, students with disabilities create a much greater variety of needs. Its harmonisation is a very important dimension of teacher activity, which demands extraordinary flexibility from a teacher. A teacher must be constantly ready for unexpected challenges and be able to improvise as well as perform various roles *"<…> a painter and artist…"*. The diversity of student abilities also creates the multi-dimensional nature of professional activity. A teacher is a great proficient of one's field, able to educate students and act together with other teachers in overcoming challenges created by special needs. A teacher in pursuit if professional success is ready for constant quests and continuous improvement. Teachers underline the need for an ongoing analysis of their work experience as well as interest in global progress in science and practice. It is evident that the disability phenomenon that becomes expressed in the environment of inclusive education, alters the nature of professional activity of a teacher, promoting active involvement professionally. A teacher, accepting a disability as a natural phenomenon, creates an equal relationship among students, helping children to understand episodes of social discrimination that could instigate preference for a bodily disability in the conception of human existence rather than in social interaction.

Consolidation of secondary survey results aimed at answering the question: *What attitudes of educators and inclusively educated students result in internalised perception of disability as a social phenomenon*?

The comparative analysis of the secondary survey generalisations allows making insights and stating that all groups of participants under discussion (students with disabilities, students without disabilities and teachers) pay attention to biological effects of a disability; however, they emphasise the disability phenomenon particularly in the context of social interaction. Biological disability manifestations are reflected in interpretations of their effects in the reality of inclusive education.

Research results allow stating that disability as a social reality phenomenon is internalised in the understanding of the educated and educators in three directions: 1) through interpretation of effects of a person's otherness in social interaction; 2) expression of equivalence and dignity in interpersonal relationships; and 3) reflections of experiences related to participation in life of society.

Internalisation through interpretation of effects of person's otherness in social interaction. The effect of a disability – a person's otherness – is mostly actualised in the group of students with a disability. Reflecting on their situation in a regular education environment, these inclusively educated students very clearly perceive differences of their bodily functions; however, they do not accentuate such differences but rather the effects. These students compare their abilities with regular abilities of their peers in social contexts. It may be stated that internalisation of disability as a social phenomenon actually encourages to strive for greater results. These attitudes are based on acceptance of one's own situation.

Observing their peers with disabilities, students without disabilities also see and understand biological differences; however, they treat the effects as a natural phenomenon of life. Social interpretation of disability actualises cognition in common everyday life situations and encourages to experience empathy. Peers, as if responding to motivation of the disabled to strive for high results, pay attention to their success and strengths.

In their professional contemplations, teachers do not accentuate biological differences of students. They emphasise differences in student abilities that are interpreted as a natural basis for student diversity, which needs to be recognised. Therefore, we can state that interpretation of effects pertaining to biological difference in the context of inclusive education reality promotes student cognition and motivation to recognise differences in their needs.

Internalisation through expression of equivalence and dignity in interpersonal relationships. The research results show that in attitudes of students with disabilities, internalisation of the disability conception occurs through assertion of own inborn equivalence, recognising good traits of own character gained in the disability situation and aiming for dignified involvement in community life. According to the opinion of students with disabilities, anthropocentric values fostered in a community are an important precondition for dignity experiences of a person with disabilities in social interaction.

Reflections of students without disabilities reflect efforts to consciously build relationships that would strengthen the sense of dignity for a person with a disability. In some sense, this attitude reflects expectations of pupils with disabilities to be recognised as community members. Objectives of social interaction step over the margin of bodily discomfort, aiming at ignoring barriers created by a disability. Attitudes of students without a disability very clearly reflect exceptional sensitivity to the situation of other people. Internalisation of the disability phenomenon takes place through cognition of its effects, empathetic cognition of other person's expectations, control of own feelings and mutually acceptable behaviour.

There is an evident ambition to foster equal worthiness of every child in attitudes of teachers. Just as in case of students without a disability, attitudes of teachers reflect dialectics of feelings. However, empathy and the ambition of a teacher to foster respect toward dignity of a student with a disability, sets landmarks between compassion and strictness.

Internalisation through participation in life of society. Reflections of students with disabilities mirror facts of experienced social discrimination. However, these experiences lead students to more in-depth contemplations on their human existence and encourage noticing the beauty of life and searching for more varied ways to overcome difficulties. Their expectations encompass a social context, which is wider than a school environment. These students have a clearly expressed attitude to transpose the best social participation experiences gained during inclusive education to society, this way creating conditions for treatment of disability as a natural phenomenon and development of equal opportunities for participation of all its members.

Just as in case of students with disabilities, students without disabilities have a clear pursuit to change social attitudes. Development of conditions for cognition of the disability phenomenon is the key measure for realisation of such attitudes. Equal social interaction may develop only once negative stereotypes and fears are defeated. Just as students with disabilities, these students believe in solving the problem through development of conditions for common activities. Their insights reveal social inclusion as the fundamental opportunity for interpersonal cognition that serves for entrenchment of equivalence among members of society.

Just as in case of students, teacher attitudes reveal a clear condition for assurance of equal participation – cognition of each person. On this basis, conditions may be created for wholesome participation of every individual. As a leader in the process of education, a teacher designs a targeted plan for the success of each student, this way creating conditions for students to get to know each other and one's self in a situation of success. Research results demonstrate that the diversity of student abilities motivates active professional involvement of a teacher and alters one's professional identity.

Summary of research results allows stating that attitudes of key groups of inclusive education – students with disabilities, students without disabilities and teachers – emphasise three dimensions for the internalisation of disability as a social phenomenon as well as related substantiating attitudes that indicate the direction of the process pertaining to internalisation of the disability phenomenon.

The first dimension – bodily otherness determined by a disability. It can be either observed in the external appearance of a person or perceived through differences of cognitive activities. This dimension is significant in the process of internalisation of disability as a social phenomenon, yet loses the sense of stigma in attitudes of participants in the process of education. Person's body language or otherness of functions is attributed to natural diversity of people and becomes the cause for harmonisation of social interaction.

The second dimension – recognition of equivalence. In this sense, disability becomes a measure for harmonisation of social interaction. In the presence of a disability, recognition of inborn human worthiness becomes relevant. In social interaction, anthropocentric values (tolerance and respect) are pinnacled, greater attention is given to fostering human dignity.

The third dimension – participation in social life. In this area of social reality, a disability serves as an indication of harmonious and mature community. A community that aims at getting to know each of its members, identify their needs and create an environment for wholesome participation, eradicates social discrimination together with the mystified sense of a disability.

Final conclusions

Results of this research allow certain insights into answers to the question: *"What attitudes of educators and inclusively educated students result in internalised perception of disability as a social phenomenon?"*

Environment for social interaction plays a crucial role in the development of the perception of the disability phenomenon. Acting together in the reality of inclusive education, students with and without disabilities have excellent conditions for observing and assessing the limits of their own abilities as well as those of others; getting to know feelings and understand expectations; and being active participants of undergoing processes. In getting to know each other under natural conditions, cognition of disability as a natural phenomenon develops. Students no longer remain indifferent to difficulties of peers with disabilities while trying to manage their feelings and gaining an attitude for respecting dignity of these people as well as pursuing equal partnership with them. As students with disabilities recognise their real abilities in a natural environment, a certain truth is discovered: just as students without disabilities can encounter difficulties, the disabled not only face difficulties but also have strengths. The attitude of these students to emphasise their strengths and identify most of their needs with needs of the majority, eliminates the mystified conception of disability and discloses this phenomenon in the general context of human existence. This way, interpretations of the disability phenomenon are transposed to the social sphere.

Accepting the diversity of students as the cause for flexible professional decisions, teachers communicate a message to students regarding natural differences among people and their equal worthiness. Developing the education setting centred on the success of each student, they prove the possibility of success for those in a disability situation. This way, in the reality of inclusive education, students gain experience in the development of equal social interaction, recognising disability as a natural attribute of human individuality.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The use of the research in other contexts of education has certain limitations. The delivered qualitative meta-analysis generalises research data that analyse processes of inclusive education in one school. The analysed case has unique attributes. The school is Catholic, therefore, it puts a lot of emphasis on value-based education and recognition of a person's equivalence. It is possible that other communities underline other priorities that promote other attitudes among students. Consequently, it may be valuable to analyse problems pertaining to social interaction in other contexts of inclusive education, this way creating research-based and more abstracted preconditions for wholesome participation of students with a disability in inclusive education.

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Neįgalumo kaip socialinio reiškinio internalizacija įtraukiojo ugdymo realybėje

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Santrauka

Šio tyrimo rezultatai leidžia daryti kai kurias įžvalgas, atsakant į probleminį klausimą: *„Kokiomis mokinių, ugdomų įtraukiojo ugdymo sąlygomis, bei pedagogų nuostatomis yra internalizuojama neįgalumo kaip socialinio reiškinio samprata?“.*

Atliktas kokybinis tyrimas taikant vieno atvejo strategiją ir kokybinės metaanalizės metodą. Tyrimo metu bendrinami keturių vienoje mokykloje, atviroje skirtingas galimybes turintiems mokiniams, vykdytų tyrimų duomenys. Nagrinėjamos mokinių, turinčių ir neturinčių negalių, bei pedagogų nuostatos.

Nustatyta, kad negalios fenomeno sampratos formavimuisi didelės reikšmės turi aplinka, kurioje vyksta socialinė interakcija. Turintiems ir neturintiems negalių mokiniams veikiant kartu, susidaro puikios sąlygos stebėti ir vertinti vieniems kitus, o kartu ir savo galimybių ribas, pažinti jausmus, suprasti lūkesčius ir būti vykstančių procesų aktyviais dalyviais. Pažįstant vieniems kitus natūraliomis sąlygomis, formuojasi ir negalios fenomeno kaip natūralaus reiškinio suvokimas. Mokiniai nelieka abejingi negalią turinčių bendraamžių sunkumams ir ugdosi nuostatą gerbti šių žmonių orumą bei siekti lygiavertės partnerystės su jais. Negalią turintiems mokiniams natūralioje aplinkoje atpažįstant realias savo galimybes atrandama tiesa, kad neįgalieji turi ne tik sunkumų, bet ir stiprybių, taip pat kaip ir mokiniai, neturintys negalių, turi sunkumų. Mokytojai, priimdami mokinių įvairovę kaip lanksčių profesinių sprendimų priežastį, perduoda mokiniams žinią apie natūralius skirtumus tarp žmonių ir vienodą jų vertę. Kuriama į kiekvieno mokinio sėkmę orientuotą ugdymo erdvė pagrindžia sėkmės galimybę net ir esant neįgalumo situacijoje.

Įtraukiojo ugdymo tikrovėje asmens kitoniškumas tampa socialinės interakcijos harmonizavimo priežastimi; žmonių lygiavertiškumo pripažinimas aktualizuoja antropocentrinių vertybių (tolerancijos, pagarbos) puoselėjimą bendruomenėje; neįgaliųjų dalyvavimo lygis bendrose veiklose yra brandžios harmoningos bendruomenės indikatorius.

Esminiai žodžiai: *negalia, įtraukusis ugdymas, socialinė neįgalumo samprata.*