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INTEGRATION-RELATED ATTITUDES OF HUNGARIAN PRESCHOOL TEACHER CANDIDATES FOCUSING ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-PREPAREDNESS

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2ND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION (ICECI2018)

“Current Research & Innovative Implications in Early Childhood Intervention”

March 29-31, 2018

Kemer/Antalya, Turkey

<http://www.early-inclusion.eu>

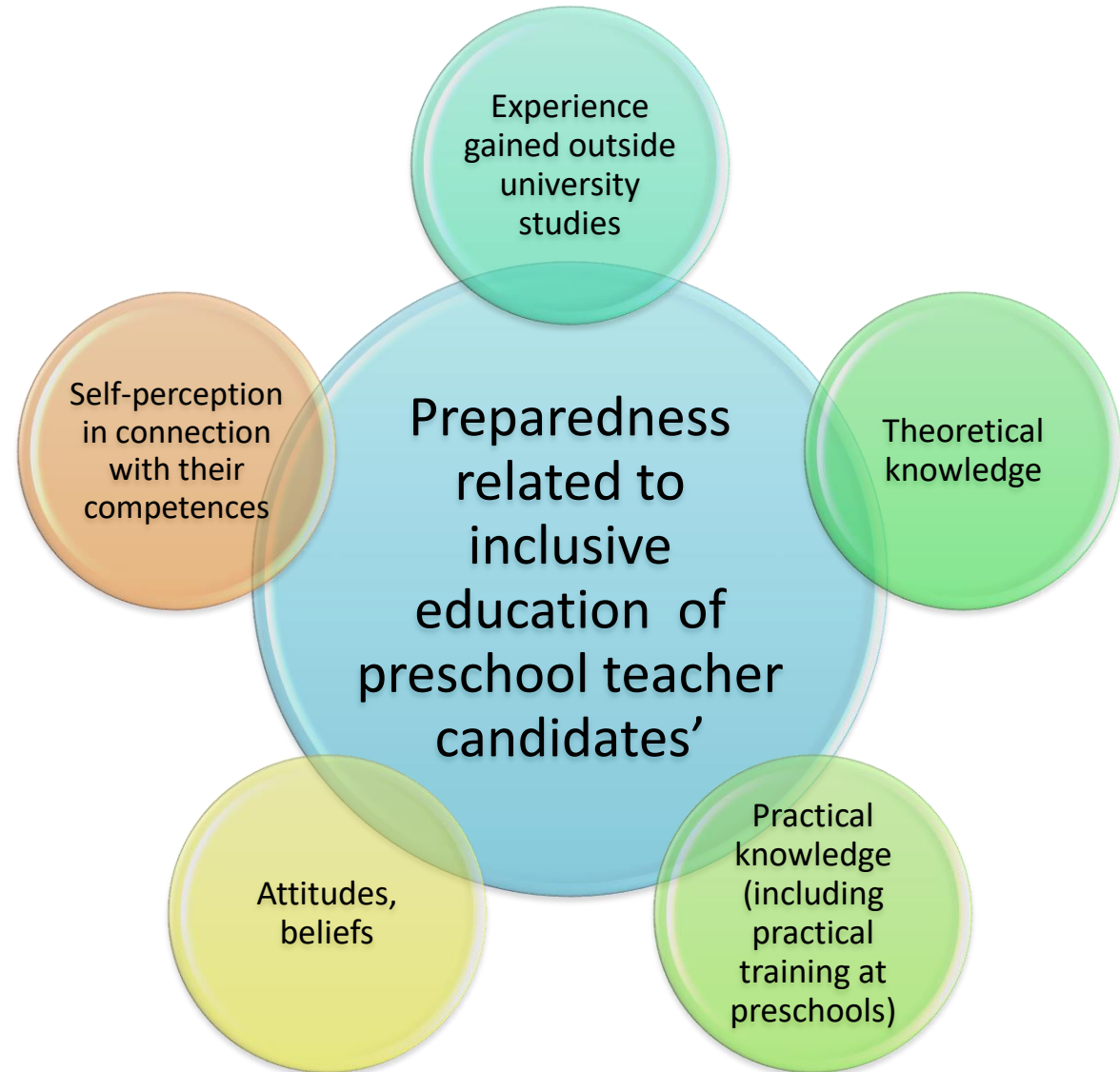
The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
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Introduction

Researches focusing on integration or inclusion-related attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of teachers (e.g. Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Mitchell & Hegde, 2007) and teacher candidates (e.g. Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Aldrich, 2002; Domović, Vlasta & Bouillet, 2017; Böddi & Serfőző, 2017)



Factors influencing the attitudes of teacher candidates related to integration – focusing on teacher training



The importance of preparing teacher trainees for integration, and moreover inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002); models of teacher training (Pető, 2011)

The aspect of emotions (e. g. the relevance of stressors) (cf. Pető, 2010)

The importance of experience gained with children with special educational needs („contact hypothesis”) (pl. Avramidis & Norwich, 2002)

The importance of preparing students for inclusion; their opinion about teacher training (Böddi, 2017)

The place of preschool in the Hungarian educational system

- preschool (or kindergarten, in Hungarian “óvoda”) is the first compulsory educational institution for children (ages 3 to 6 years) (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education)
- Using the terminology of International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): Early Childhood Education (level 0) and „preprimary education” (the second stage of level 0) (UNESCO, 2012)
- preschool teacher training: university, bachelor (BA) level - compulsory courses related to special pedagogy, integration, inclusion



Aims of this study

1. *To study the integration-related attitudes of graduating preschool teacher candidates focusing on their self-perception in connection with preparedness*
2. *To learn what kind of experience – in- and outside of teacher training – contributes to the sense of preparedness and integration-related competence.*
3. *To reveal the opinion of preschool teacher candidates about the inclusion related aspects of teacher training*

Hypotheses

1. *Experience gained in- and outside of teacher training in connection with children with special educational needs correlates with more positive attitude towards integration as well as extended perception of competence and preparedness.*
2. *Characteristics of the preschools where students completed their practical training are related to the perception of preparedness.*
3. *Positive experience in integration leads to the extended perception of competence and preparedness*
4. *Since experience of full-time and part-time students are different, it is predicted that differences appear in their perceptions of preparedness*

Participants and data collection



- 360 graduating preschool teacher students (3rd year of study)
- attending 10 Hungarian preschool teacher training institutions
- 355 female, 3 male; age between 20 and 50 ys. (mean age: 26.09 ys.)
- 224 full-time, 134 part-time students – most of them are trained in integrating preschool groups (85,6%)
- Data collection: paper-based and online survey (Qualtrics Survey Software)

The survey

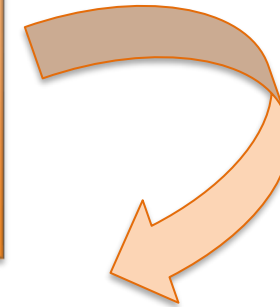
*Questions determining
the sample*

*Other experience
(different from teacher
training) related to
children with special
educational needs*

*Training experience –
Theoretical training*

*Training experience –
Practical training*

*Perception of
preparedness and
emotions regarding
integration*



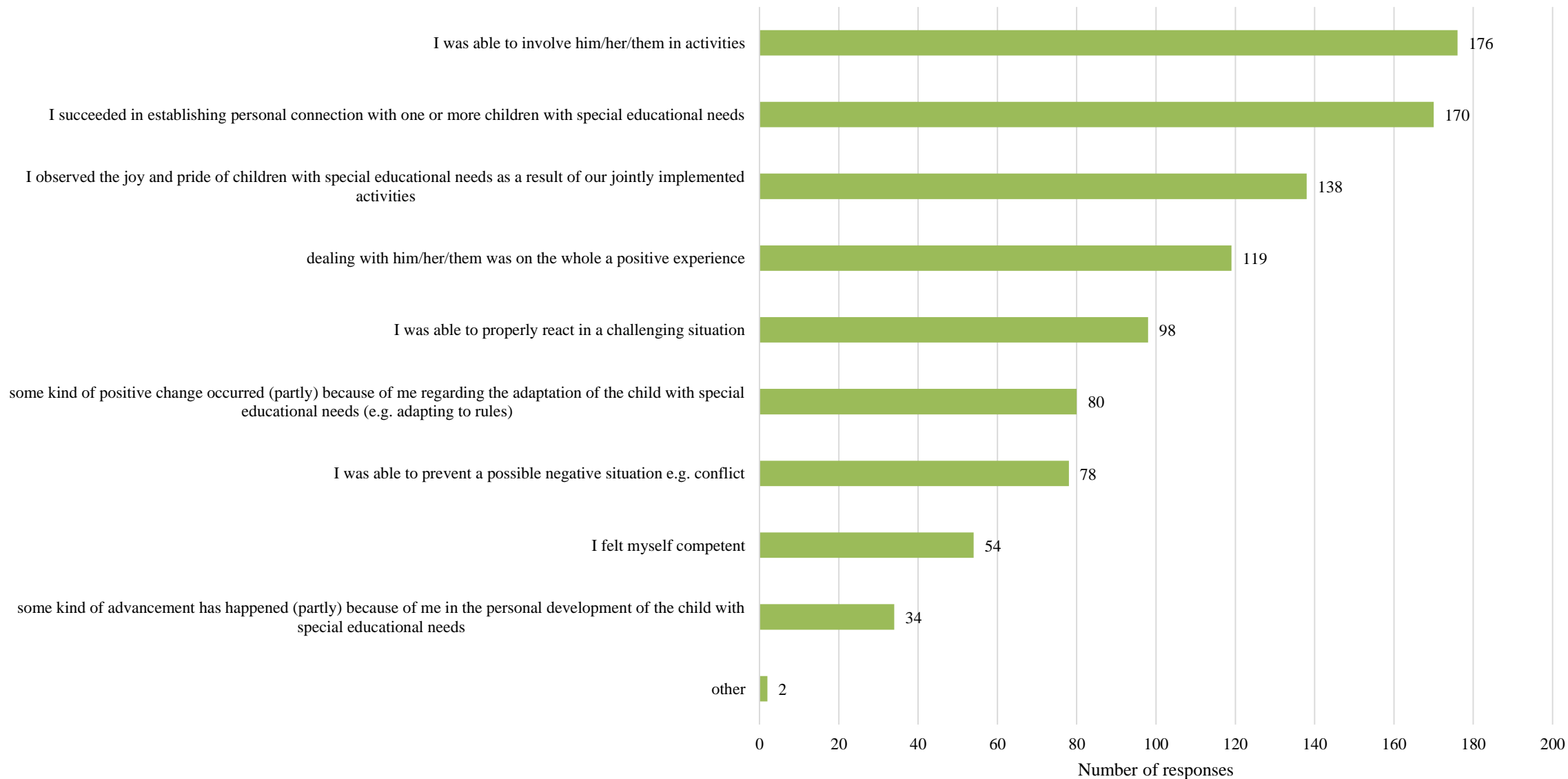
- reflecting on the knowledge and perspective derived from the theoretical training
- reflecting on the practical knowledge derived from teacher training
- reflecting on their own competence and the borders of it (tasks and challenges)
- emotions (generally and in specific situations)

Likert-scale (1-4)

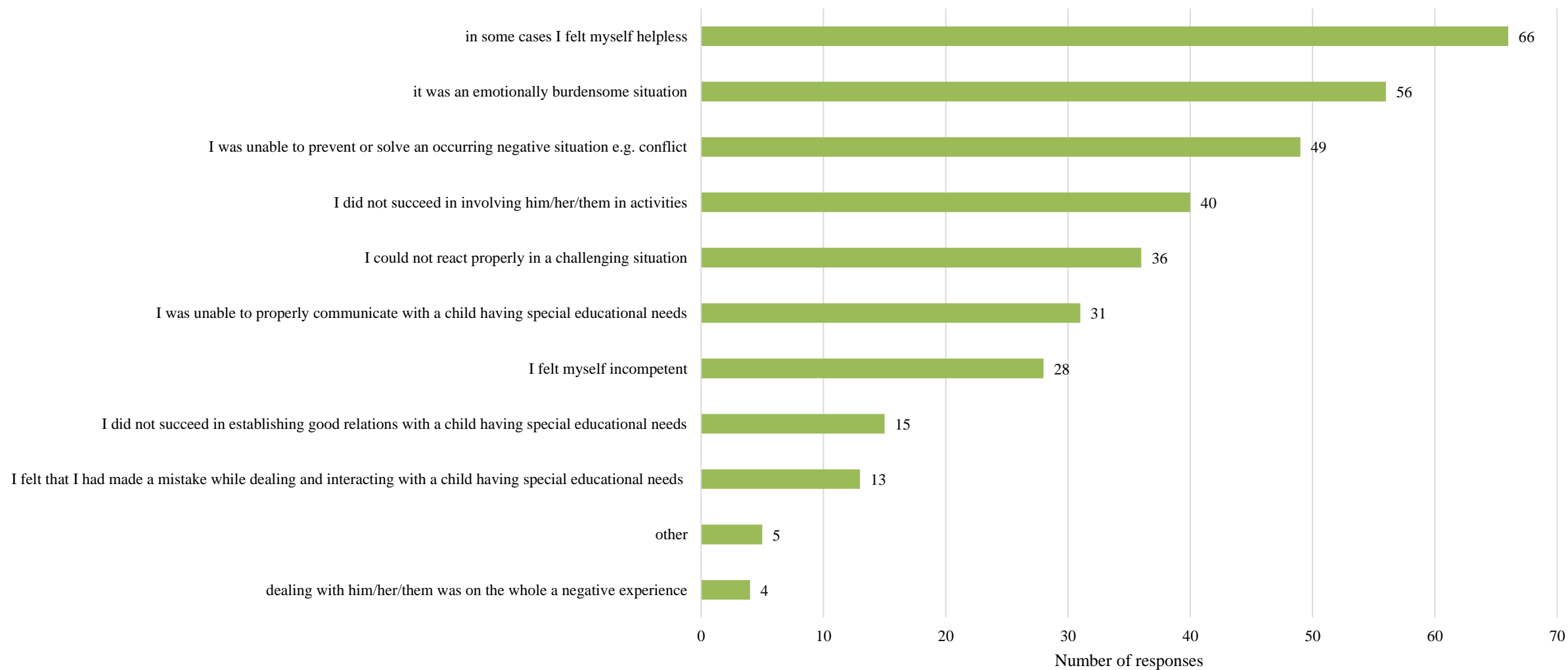


RESULTS

Positive experiences



Negative experiences



Experience gained outside the university on children with special educational needs 1.

Item	Experience outside the university?	Working with children between the age of 0 and 7 years?	Working with children with special educational needs?
At the end of my preschool teacher education, I feel I know the possibilities of differentiation.	t=2.02; p=0.05 no		
I consider myself not having enough experience regarding the integrated preschool education of children with special educational needs.			t=3.63; p<0.01 no
I am fully aware of what kind of professionals I can, as a preschool teacher, turn to in relation with the integration of children with special educational needs.	t=2.11; p<0.05 yes		
I feel myself helpless when thinking about the integration of a child with special educational needs.	t=2.25; p<0.05 no		
I am afraid of talking with parents about the problems and special educational needs of their child.		t=2.47; p=0.01 no	



Experience gained outside the university on children with special educational needs 2.

Item	Experience outside the university?	Working with children between the age of 0 and 7 years?	Working with children with special educational needs?
I fully know who to ask for information and advice in case I learn that a child with special educational needs is about to arrive in my group.	t=2.06; p<0.05 yes		
I plan to complete further trainings related to children with special educational needs and integration.	t=2.62; p=0.01 yes	t=2.41; p<0.05 yes	
I am worried about working in a preschool group that integrates children with special educational needs.	t=2.34; p<0.05 no		
On the whole, I consider myself prepared to receive children with special educational needs in my preschool group.		t=2.78; p=0.01 yes	

Motivation originated in theoretical training for gaining experience related to special educational needs

Item	Whether he/she sought SEN-related contents during education?
I am fully aware of what kind of professionals I can, as a preschool teacher, turn to in relation to the integration of children with special educational needs.	t=2.21; p<0.05 yes
I feel myself helpless when thinking about the integration of a child with special educational needs.	t=2.27; p<0.05 no
I would gladly accept working in a preschool group integrating children with special educational needs.	t=2.61; p=0.01 yes
I plan to complete further training related to children with special educational needs and integration.	t=4.39; p<0.01 yes
I think I am able to properly approach a child with special educational needs.	t=2.79; p=0.01 yes
I am worried about working in a preschool group that integrates children with special educational needs.	t=2.44; p<0.05 no
On the whole, I consider myself prepared to receive children with special educational needs in my preschool group.	t=3.96; p<0.01 yes

Characteristics of preschool teacher-training from the practical aspect 1.

Item	Integrating group?	Whether the student completed tasks involving child(ren) with special educational needs?
During my preschool teacher education, I have received practical knowledge that I consider useful in connection with integrating children with special educational needs.	t=2.42; p<0.05 yes	t=2.35; p<0.05 yes
At the end of my preschool teacher education, I feel I know the possibilities of differentiation.	t=2.63; p=0.01 yes	
I consider myself not having enough experience regarding the integrated preschool education of children with special educational needs.	t=2.25; p<0.05 no	t=2.33; p<0.05 no
I feel myself helpless when thinking about the integration of a child with special educational needs.	t=3.39; p<0.01 no	

Characteristics of preschool teacher-training from the practical aspect 2.

Item	Integrating group?	Whether the student completed tasks involving child(ren) with special educational needs?
I would gladly accept working in a preschool group integrating children with special educational needs.		t=2.06; p<0.05 yes
I think I am able to properly approach a child with special educational needs.		t=3.17; p<0.01 yes
I am worried about working in a preschool group that integrates children with special educational needs.	t=3.08; p=0.01 no	
On the whole, I consider myself prepared to receive children with special educational needs in my preschool group.		t=2.46; p<0.05 yes

Experience with children with special educational needs during practical training 1.

Statement	Had positive experience	Had negative experience
During my preschool teacher education, I have received practical knowledge that I consider useful in connection with integrating children with special educational needs.	t=3.32; p<0.01 yes	
During my preschool teacher education, I have gained an attitude of acceptance toward development.	t=2.19; p<0.05 yes	
At the end of my preschool teacher education, I feel I know development methods.	t=2.04; p=0.05 yes	
I consider myself not having enough experience regarding the integrated preschool education of children with special educational needs.	t=2.63; p=0.01 no	t=2.83; p<0.01 yes
I am fully aware of what kind of professionals I can, as a preschool teacher, turn to in relation to the integration of children with special educational needs.	t=2.5; p<0.05 yes	

Experience with children with special educational needs during practical training 2.

Statement	Had positive experience	Had negative experience
I feel myself helpless when thinking about the integration of a child with special educational needs.	t=2.24; p<0.05 no	t=2.29; p<0.05 yes
I fully know who to ask for information and advice in case I learn that a child with special educational needs is about to arrive in my group.	t=3.23; p<0.01 yes	
I would gladly accept working in a preschool group integrating children with special educational needs.	t=3.58; p<0.01 yes	
I think I am able to properly approach a child with special educational needs.	t=2.76; p=0.01 yes	t=2.35; p<0.05 no
On the whole, I consider myself prepared to receive children with special educational needs in my preschool group.	t=3.12; p<0.01 yes	t=2.16; p<0.05 no

The opinion of students about the inclusion related aspects of teacher training

- Expression of **dissatisfaction** and deficiencies in connection with the specific characteristics of integration in preschool teacher education
- ***Only 1.36% and 1.02% of the participants found their preparation proper and sufficient***
- Requirements about increasing preparation mostly in the fields of:
 - methodologies (25.31%)
 - communication, managing conflicts (23.28%)
 - more knowledge on special education (22.94%)
- Clearly expression of the need for more **practical knowledge** and the importance of learning through practical forms, such as:
 - presentation of best practice (19.81%)
 - conversation with teachers having great experience in the field of integration (18.19%)
 - visiting institutions (17.51%)
 - simulating situations (12.21%)
 - participating in training (10.67%)

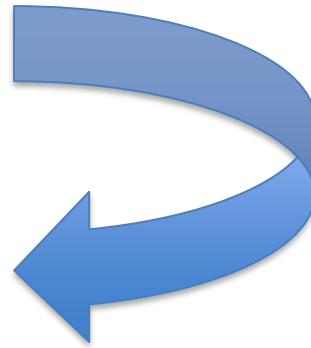
Discussion

- *The hypotheses were mostly verified*
- Experience with children with special educational needs outside of university training are in connection with perception of preparedness
- The more knowledge and motivation to attend courses related to inclusion correlates to more positive attitude and the perception of more preparedness and competence.
- The characteristics (e.g. integrated group or not) of the preschools where students worked during practical training are crucial.
- The **positive and negative experience** and emotions with children with special educational needs are a key of importance regarding the perception of preparedness and competence.
- *Teachers (university) and mentors (preschools) have an important role to help students interpreting and reframing their experience*

Summary

- We found that students expressed **generally positive attitudes towards integration**
- Teacher candidates expressed the **need of practical knowledge** related to inclusion
- **Changing experience with other countries**

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Welcome to Early Inclusion

Edit

Early Inclusion is a European project within the frame of Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships. From 1.10.2015 until 30.3.2018 the project focuses on increased knowledge and shared methods concerning inclusion for pre-school children who have a disability or are at risk of becoming disabled.


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Thank you for your attention!

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