



INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY ІНКЛЮЗИВНА ПЕДАГОГІКА

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ACTIVATING TEACHING IN CIVICS CLASSES FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN SPECIAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Activating methods gradually involve students in the learning process and support their independent thinking, creativity, cooperation and problem-solving ability. Activating methods bring dynamics, interaction and a practical dimension to the teaching process. For students with intellectual disabilities in special primary schools, it is necessary to adapt teaching methods to their abilities and individual needs, as well as when using activating methods in civic education classes. The main goals of civic education according to the educational program for the mentally disabled include purposeful influence on the knowledge and actions of students in the spirit of democracy, humanism and morality, developing the emotional and volitional sphere of the student, orienting the student as a future active member of the work team. Students learn to create social contacts, behave in society according to norms. They learn what a family, school is, they acquire basic knowledge about the rule of law, about political institutions. Teaching civics is also very important for students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, teachers use various methods for motivation and activation. The article contains a survey in which we focused on the use of activating methods during the teaching of civics in special primary schools. We chose an electronic questionnaire as the method of data collection. The aim of the survey was to examine the use of activating methods by teachers of special primary schools during the teaching of civics and to evaluate their advantages and disadvantages.

Keywords: civics, special primary school, activating methods, student with intellectual disabilities, questionnaire.

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АКТИВІЗУЮЧЕ ВИКЛАДАННЯ НА УРОКАХ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОЇ ОСВІТИ У СПЕЦІАЛЬНИХ ПОЧАТКОВИХ ШКОЛАХ ДЛЯ УЧНІВ З ПОРУШЕННЯМИ ІНТЕЛЕКТУ

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В статті висвітлено активізуючі методи, які активно використовують у навчальному процесі спеціальної школи для розвитку самостійного мислення, творчості, співпраці та здатності вирішувати проблеми в учнів з порушеннями інтелекту. Зазначено, що активізуючі методи надають динаміки, взаємодії та практичного виміру навчальному процесу. Для учнів з порушеннями інтелекту в спеціальних початкових школах необхідно адаптувати методи навчання до їхніх здібностей та індивідуальних потреб. Наголошено, що основні цілі громадянської освіти згідно з навчальною програмою для осіб з порушеннями інтелекту включають цілеспрямований вплив на знання та дії учнів у дусі демократії, гуманізму та моральності, розвиток емоційної та вольової сфери учня, орієнтацію учня як майбутнього активного члена трудового колективу. Учні вчаться налагоджувати соціальні контакти, поводитися в суспільстві відповідно до норм. Вони дізнаються, що таке сім'я, школа, отримують базові знання про верховенство права, про політичні інститути. Викладання громадянської освіти дуже важливе для учнів з порушеннями інтелекту. Тому вчителі використовують різні методи для мотивації та активізації учнів. Стаття містить опитування, в якому ми зосередилися на використанні активізуючих методів під час викладання громадянської освіти в спеціальних початкових школах. Ми обрали електронний опитувальник як метод збору даних. Метою опитування було дослідити використання активізуючих методів вчителями спеціальних початкових шкіл під час викладання громадянської освіти та оцінити їхні переваги та недоліки.

Ключові слова: громадянська освіта, спеціальна початкова школа, активізуючі методи, учні з порушеннями інтелекту.

Introduction of the issue. Several factors contribute to the development of mental retardation, including congenital, environmental, social and specific genetic disorders [3]. A person with mental retardation differs from their healthy peers in specific aspirations [10]. Thinking and cognition in an individual with mental retardation are inconsistent, imprecise, uncritical, with a tendency towards stereotypical thinking, difficult formation of concepts, and imprecise judgments. People with mental retardation differ from those without mental retardation mainly in their concrete thinking and weak ability not only to generalize but also to abstract [7]. Mental retardation affects the individual's speech, curiosity is not manifested in learning, and students' memory is mechanical. Students with mild mental retardation often learn by heart and do not understand what they are learning. Currently, in Slovakia, the education and upbringing of mentally disabled individuals is carried out according to the State Educational Program for Pupils with Mental Disabilities for Primary Education developed by the State

Pedagogical Institute, valid from 1.9.2016. According to the State Educational Program for Pupils with Mental Disabilities for Primary Education, the main goals of primary education for pupils with mild mental disabilities are the development of key competencies, as a combination of knowledge, experience and attitudes of pupils at a level that is personally achievable for them. In the education of mentally disabled pupils, special methods, special organizational forms are used and the content of education must be adapted to the type and degree of disability. [8]. The subject of civics belongs to the educational subject Man and Society. Mistrik, Miskolci and Pucherová [4] emphasize that for effective teaching of civics it is important to constantly look for new approaches and methods, and also to deal with topics that students experience every day. The revival of teaching can be realized through interesting projects, cooperation with other schools, organizations, local governments. Lectures with experts such as a doctor, lawyer, psychologist, etc. can be held during classes.

Current state of the issue. Teachers of special primary schools face an important challenge, such as the implementation of activating methods in teaching civics and at the same time adapting individual methods to the developmental abilities of students with intellectual disabilities. From the above, it follows that a teacher must use various specific procedures in the education of students with intellectual disabilities in order to be able to convey as much knowledge as possible to students, which at the same time the students will be able to accept. According to Žovinc, Duchovičová et al. [11] in special education, an individual approach is a key factor. Teachers select appropriate methods and aids based on the individual needs of each student. The education of students with special needs is carried out using special methods that help overcome or alleviate their disabilities. In special education, it is also important that students are activated and motivated to perform academically. Activating methods guide the teaching process so that educational goals are achieved primarily through the independent learning activities of students. They can be applied in various variations, adapted to the specific conditions of students, they can be combined with each other, and it is up to the teacher to apply them in teaching. If a teacher intends to implement activating methods in the teaching process, he should master the basic principles of creative teaching, which include:

- supporting and activating students' learning initiative,
- democratic approach and creating a free environment for students' work,
- supporting creative thinking and developing students' critical thinking by creating conditions for their creative activity,
- enabling students' intellectual flexibility,
- encouraging students to self-assess,
- developing students' sensitivity to the problems of others,
- mastering the technique of asking questions,
- supporting students in overcoming failures [2].

Results and discussion. We perceive activating methods as ways or techniques by

which a teacher can effectively lead the teaching process. With their help, the teacher activates and motivates students to maintain greater attention to the lesson and thus be able to learn more in a shorter time. According to Mochňáková [5], it is crucial that teachers learn to use activating methods routinely in daily teaching practice, which will make education and training more enjoyable, interesting and fun for all parties involved. Šutovcová [9] states that research conducted by authors such as Carbogim et al. [2019]; Hosam, Hurmuzan [2018]; Kusumoto [2018]; Barrett [2017]; Al Mutairi [2015] confirms that a person can remember much more if they use more sensory organs during teaching or experience something, or try it themselves.

Methods of survey. The organization of the survey included the study of professional literature (analysis and synthesis of scientific and professional publications, journals and Internet resources). The next step was the implementation of the survey in the form of a questionnaire in electronic form, which was sent to teachers of the subject of civics for students with a mild degree of intellectual disability. The final part presents the evaluation and interpretation of the collected data.

Survey evaluation. The total number of completed questionnaires was 114. Most respondents, 42 (37%) are aged 41-50 years, 36 respondents (31.5%) are aged 51 and over, 33 respondents (28.9%) are aged 31-40 years and three respondents (2.6%) are under 30 years. 46 respondents (40%) have been teaching civics for more than ten years, 11 respondents (10%) have been teaching civics for 6-10 years.

As a research problem, we set the question What is the impact of activating methods in teaching civics at special primary schools on pupils with intellectual disabilities? The subject of the research was to examine the experiences of civics teachers with the use of activating methods during the teaching of civics at special primary schools. The aim of the research was to examine the use of activating methods by teachers of special primary schools during the teaching of civics and to evaluate their advantages and disadvantages.

Hypothesis 1: We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the length of practice of the respondents and the approach to teaching civics.

Hypothesis 2: We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the length of practice and the activating methods used.

When asked *What are the most important goals of teaching civics in special primary*

schools?, respondents chose the three most important goals. The answers are presented in Table 1. The most important goal is considered by respondents to be *the promotion of self-esteem and respect for others* (22%). The same number of answers (20.4%) were given to the goals of learning about *rights and responsibilities and the development of social and communication skills*.

Table 1

The most important goals of teaching Civics

Answer	n	%
Developing critical thinking	24	7,1
Promoting accountability and civic engagement	48	14,2
Learning about rights and responsibilities	69	20,4
Development of social and communication skills	69	20,4
Understanding the foundations of democracy and justice	47	13,9
Promoting self-esteem and respect for others	75	22
Other (please specify)	7	2
Summary:	339	100

Source: own processing.

When asked *What approach do you use when teaching Civics?*, we divided the respondents' answers according to their length of experience. The results are

presented in Table 2. Most respondents reported blended teaching (80.7%). In the category of teachers with up to 5 years of experience, no one implements classical teaching.

Table 2

Approach to teaching Civics

Age of respondents	Answer	n	%
0-5 years (57)	Classical teaching	0	0
	Activating methods	12	21,1
	Combined approach	45	78,9
6 and more years (57)	Classical teaching	10	17,5
	Activating methods	0	0
	Combined approach	47	82,5
Overall (114)	Classical teaching	10	8,8
	Activating methods	12	10,5
	Combined approach	92	80,7

Source: own processing.

When asked *Which of the following activating methods do you most often use when teaching Civics?*, they could choose

multiple answers from the options offered, as shown in Table 3. For teachers with up to 5 years of teaching experience,

the most commonly used method is group work (20.7%). Teachers with more than 5

years of experience most often use group work and simulation of real situations.

Table 3

The most frequently used activating methods in teaching Civics

Length of teaching	Answer	n	%
0-5 year (57)	Group work	39	20,7
	Role playing	30	15,9
	Project-based teaching	18	9,6
	Didactic games	22	11,7
	Brainstorming	11	5,9
	Discussions	37	19,7
	Simulations of real situations	15	8
	Working with live demos or videos	16	8,5
6 and more years (57)	Group work	42	18,7
	Role playing	36	16
	Project-based teaching	27	12
	Didactic games	22	9,8
	Brainstorming	16	7,1
	Discussions	17	7,6
	Simulations of real situations	42	18,6
	Working with live demos or videos	23	10,2

Source: own processing.

When asked *What advantages do you see in using activating methods in civics classes in special schools?* Respondents gave multiple answers, the processing of

which is presented in Table 4. Respondents cite helping students better understand the curriculum as the biggest advantage of using activating methods (20.6%).

Table 4

Advantages of using activating methods in Civics lessons

Answer	n	%
They increase student motivation	75	19,1
They help students better understand the curriculum	81	20,6
They develop critical thinking	39	9,9
They enable better memorization of information	78	19,8
They support collaboration between students	69	17,6
They allow for better adaptation to individual student needs	51	13
Overall	393	100

Source: own processing.

The seventh question asked: *What disadvantages do you see in using activating methods in civics classes in special schools?*

in which respondents had the opportunity to choose several possible answers. The results are presented in Table 5. The

respondents identified the possibility of high demands on the leadership and

organization of the class as the biggest disadvantage (24.2%).

Table 5

Advantages of using activating methods in Civics lessons

Answer	n	%
Lack of time to prepare	24	12,6
Low student motivation	18	9,5
Uneven student engagement	45	23,7
Lack of necessary materials or technology	57	30
High demands on class leadership and organization	46	24,2
Overall	190	100

Source: own processing.

To the question *How do you assess the impact of activating methods on the involvement of students with special needs in teaching?* Only 110 respondents answered, with 68.2% of respondents seeing a positive impact of activating methods on students, 19.1% of respondents perceive a very positive impact, and 12.7% of teachers report a neutral impact.

Respondents also answered the question *What technologies do you use in Civics classes?*, in which they could choose multiple answers. The most used technology is the interactive whiteboard (44.8%), followed by working with videos and documents from the Internet (34.4%), a computer/tablet is used by 18% of teachers, and a digital textbook is used by 2.4% of respondents.

Table 6

The impact of activating methods on student engagement in teaching

Answer	n	%
Very positive (students are always actively involved)	21	19,1
Positive (students mostly engage)	75	68,2
Neutral (only some students participate)	14	12,7
Negative (students do not engage)	0	0
Overall	110	100

Source: own processing.

Table 7

Technologies used in lessons

Answer	n	%
Interactive whiteboards	112	44,8
Computers/tablets	45	18
Digital textbooks	6	2,4
Videos and documents from the internet	86	34,4
Other (please specify)	1	0,4
Overall	250	100

Source: own processing.

The previous question is followed by *What do you consider to be the greatest advantage of using technology in teaching*

Civics?, respondents were given the option of selecting multiple answers. Respondents chose improved access to

information as the greatest advantage (Table 8).

Table 8

Benefits of using technology in teaching

Answer	n	%
They improve access to information	69	24,5
They allow for more effective adaptation of the curriculum to the individual needs of the student	57	20,3
They increase student interest and engagement	78	27,8
They facilitate working with students with different types of disabilities	59	21
They simplify the organization of teaching	18	6,4
Overall	281	100

Source: own processing

In the questionnaire, we also asked respondents about their opinion on *whether training or professional development of teachers in the field of activating methods is necessary*. 63.2% of respondents consider them necessary and essential, 23.6% of respondents cannot assess this and 13.2% of

respondents consider themselves sufficiently prepared. We asked respondents *What other training or support materials would help you improve the use of activating methods in Civic education?*, where they could mark multiple answers, the results are recorded in Table 9.

Table 9

Additional training supporting the use of activating methods

Answer	n	%
Training focused on activating teaching methods	59	24,5
Educational games and apps	71	29,5
Examples and instructions for specific activities	67	27,8
Improvement of equipment and technological resources	28	11,6
Mentoring or support from experienced teachers	16	6,6
Overall	241	100

Source: own processing

We tested the hypotheses using Student's t-test. If the t-test values are in the range of 1 to -1, this will mean that no statistically significant difference between the variables was found.

Hypothesis 1: We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' length of practice and the approach to teaching civics.

The hypothesis is related to the answers from question 1 and the answers from question 4. The results of the data analysis show that $t = 0$ and therefore no

statistically significant relationship was found between the variables. **The hypothesis was not confirmed.**

Hypothesis 2: We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the length of practice and the activating methods used.

The hypothesis is related to the answers from question 2 and the answers from question 5. The results of the data analysis show that $t = -1.01685$ and therefore a statistically significant relationship was found between the

variables. **The hypothesis was confirmed.**

80.7% of respondents use a combined approach in teaching civics at special primary schools, thus alternating classical teaching with activating methods. Orbánová [6] conducted a study in which she analyzed the state of use of activating methods and how teachers approach these methods. 65% of teachers stated that they use traditional teaching methods in teaching and only 25% answered that they use a combination of activating and traditional teaching methods. We can therefore see a significant difference compared to our result. The most frequently used activating method in teaching civics is group work, which was indicated by 19.6% of respondents. The second place was taken by the role-playing method, which was indicated by 16% of respondents. In the study conducted by Orbánová [6], teachers stated that they most often use the activating method of discussion. We can therefore see that there are differences in the use of activating methods, and these differences arise based on the subjects taught or the grades of the pupils taught. For pupils in special primary schools, different activating methods may be appropriate than for pupils in regular primary schools.

We further found that, according to 20.6% of respondents, the main advantage of activating methods in civic education classes in special schools is that they help students better understand the subject matter. The second biggest advantage is that they enable better memorization of information, which was indicated by 19.8% of respondents. Alscher et al. [1] conducted a study aimed at investigating aspects of the quality of civic education teaching in special primary schools that are related to the use of innovative teaching methods. This study illustrates the relative importance of different aspects of teaching quality in civic education and calls for continued efforts to better understand the quality of teaching in civic education. The author also emphasizes the importance of

innovative methods, stating that the biggest advantage of using them is that students enjoy the lesson more and therefore achieve better results with less effort. This means that innovative methods can significantly help students achieve better results with less effort.

Most respondents agreed that the main disadvantage of using activating methods in civic education classes in special schools is the *lack of necessary materials or technologies*, which was indicated by 30% of respondents. The study by Alscher et al. [6] lists the disadvantages of using innovative educational methods primarily in incomplete methodological materials. Our findings show that 97% of teachers use the Internet, interactive whiteboards (94%), Internet resources (91%) and computers or tablets (89%) in civic education classes. We can therefore see that current education is gradually becoming digital, which we consider a positive finding, because in our opinion, primary schools should provide students with full-fledged teaching using digital technologies, since the current world is significantly digitalized and technologies such as computers or the Internet have become a common part of our lives.

Conclusions and research perspectives. The survey revealed several important shortcomings in the area of activating methods used in special primary schools. We consider the most important to be the necessary training that would familiarize teachers with, but also improve their skills in, the use of activating methods in teaching civics. In addition to training, we recommend regularly using methods that support students' attention, alternating activating methods, introducing digital technologies into the teaching process, and respecting the individual abilities, interests, and limitations of each student. The explanation of activities to students should be simple and understandable so that all students can participate. It is important to help students understand how they can apply the acquired knowledge and skills in the real world (e.g. in decision-making, conflict resolution, following rules, etc.).

Activating methods are an important tool for increasing the interest and involvement of students in special primary schools in teaching civics. Proper adaptation to individual student needs, thorough teacher preparation, and a

willingness to try new approaches are essential. Emphasis on practicality, clarity, and multisensory engagement helps teachers create engaging and effective teaching.

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