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Adaptation trait Development for Scholars with Severe Educational Needs During Primary School Physical Education

Simas Garbenis *

Renata Geležinienė **

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine how emotional intelligence trait adaptability is integrally developed through physical education of scholars with severe special educational needs. To achieve this aim firstly a research question was formulated how is the adaptability trait developed during various social and educational contexts of physical education? This research is based on the fundamentals of qualitative microethnographic research. Several data collection and analysis methods were used: scientific literature analysis, video recordings, Braun and Clarke's reflexive analysis, latent coding using the Huber and Froelich method of sequential analysis. The results revealed 13 sub-themes and 7 themes which generated these main conclusions: The adaptation trait for scholars with severe special educational needs can be developed through various social interactions and educational contexts, which usually are constructed by the teacher, on an individual, group levels and in some cases multidimensionally, independent on the phase of the lesson, hence the activity itself is most important, thus making physical education a preferable context for such development.

KEYWORDS: Special education, physical education, emotional development, primary school students.

* Lecturer, Ph.D. Student, Vilnius University Siauliai Academy, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1261-446X>. E-mail: simas.garbenis@sa.vu.lt

** Doc. dr., Vilniaus University Siauliai Academy. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6787-3306>. E-mail: renata.geleziniene@sa.vu.lt

Desarrollo de rasgos de adaptación en estudiantes con necesidades educativas severas durante la Educación Física de la escuela primaria

RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación es determinar cómo la adaptabilidad del rasgo de inteligencia emocional se desarrolla integralmente a través de la Educación Física de los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales severas. Para lograr este objetivo, en primer lugar, se formuló una pregunta de investigación: ¿Cómo se desarrolla el rasgo de adaptabilidad durante diversos contextos sociales y educativos de la Educación Física? Esta investigación se basa en los fundamentos de la investigación microetnográfica cualitativa. Se utilizaron varios métodos de recolección y análisis de datos: Análisis de literatura científica, grabaciones de video, análisis reflexivo de Braun y Clarke, codificación latente utilizando el método de análisis secuencial de Huber y Froelich. Los resultados revelaron 13 subtemas y 7 temas que generaron estas principales conclusiones: El rasgo de adaptación para los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales severas se puede desarrollar a través de diversas interacciones sociales y contextos educativos, que generalmente son construidos por el maestro, en un individuo, niveles grupales y, en algunos casos, multidimensionales, independientes de la fase de la lección; por lo tanto, la actividad en sí es lo más importante, lo que hace que la Educación Física sea un contexto preferible para tal desarrollo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación especial, educación física, desarrollo emocional, estudiantes de primaria

Introduction

To signify the research aim, importance, and problem several theoretical questions are answered: why emotional intelligence? why for children with severe special educational needs? why physical education? how?

Answering the first question, recent discoveries presented in scientific literature it is stated, that in recent years emotional intelligence research has been gaining more and more focus of researchers working in various fields, including education in order to identify its development on behavior, quality of life, and other significant phenomena (Kleef & Cote, 2022). In an educational settings emotional intelligence development might improve scholar`s capacity to adapt to meet current and upcoming challenges, especially in inclusive education settings, to perform better socially, academically, emotionally (Frederickson et. al., 2012; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018; Fiorilli et. al., 2020; Guler ir S. Turan 2022). These

statements suggest that the *research object development of emotional intelligence trait adaptability* is beneficial to scholars both with and without special educational needs and their effectiveness in various educational settings. These statements offer an understanding of the *importance* of its development in modern curricula especially for future teachers because they are facing the need to be trained regarding the latest concepts of educational processes (Kryvylova et. al., 2022).

The answer to the second question lies in the characteristics and challenges of scholars with severe special educational needs. In the context of inclusive education various research had shown that scholars who are diagnosed with various types of special educational needs, despite their differences and similarities might be in the increased risk of becoming socially excluded, experience learning failures and psychological difficulties, develop inappropriate behavior patterns, negative self-awareness etc. (Fink et. al., 2015; D'Amico & Guastaferrò, 2017; Lereya et. al., 2022). Understanding the existence of these risks it can be vividly seen that they are seemingly connected to one's inability to adapt not only in educational contexts, but other areas, that reflect in school activities as well. Although Marzec (2017) stated that one of the main benefits of inclusive education is to optimize all educational processes for scholars with various special educational needs and ensure their social adaptation. The *problem of this research* is that most similar research is conducted focused solely on singular disabilities or special needs, especially on autism spectrum disorder, higher-grade scholars, thus leaving little to no research in regard to severe special educational needs as a singular whole and such scholar emotional intelligence adaptation trait development (Borisova, 2020; Tenerife et. al., 2022).

To clarify why this research is based on the activities of physical education classes several research conclusions are evaluated, that present the methods to effectively develop emotional intelligence through high quality and healthy social interactions, because it is present not only in inter-personal, but also in the intra-personal levels (Metaj-Macula, 2017). Furthermore, such classes are complex in the aspect of both easy and difficult activities, learning is based on both simple and complex movement, both positive and negative emotions are experienced, possibilities to differentiate the educational curricula (Deunk et. al., 2018; Petsos & Gorozidis, 2019). These statements suggest that physical activity might act as a natural vessel for emotional intelligence and adaptation development for scholars

with severe special educational needs. That is why the *aim of this research- is to determine how emotional intelligence trait adaptability is integrally developed through physical education of scholars with severe special educational needs.*

To achieve this aim firstly a *research question was formulated- how is the adaptability trait developed during various social interactions and educational contexts of physical education?*

Secondly, to answer the research question, during this qualitative microtehnographic research several data collection and analysis methods were used: scientific literature analysis, video recordings, Braun and Clarke`s reflexive analysis, latent coding using the Huber and Froelich method of sequential analysis.

1. Literature review

In recent years a significant increase on the topic of emotional intelligence, its concept, and the various impact of its development on behavior, quality of life, and other significant phenomena (Kleef & Cote, 2022). Despite that emotional intelligence is a widely research topic in such fields as: organizational, health, business, etc., several research had led to conclusions that emotional intelligence can benefit as a factor in educational contexts that greatly increases a scholar`s capacity to overcome emotional obstacles such as stress, anxiety, tendencies to skip classes or school days, display aggressive or inappropriate behavior, become socially excluded and socially underperform (Frederickson, et. al., 2012; Petrides & Mavroveli, 2018; Fiorilli, et. al., 2020; Guler & Turan, 2022). All these factors can be theoretically linked to one`s ability to adapt not only in new contexts, but also to vast and fast-changing educational requirements, challenges. The research conclusions which were stated above can be evaluated as a scholar`s lack of ability to use one`s potential in meeting new challenges, requirements or acting in new contexts. These statements suggest the ability to adapt, as a singular trait, and its development gains importance both for scholars and teachers alike. Future teachers should be trained to be able to meet these challenges, understand the changing concept of modern education and to be able to design learning environments in creative, multidisciplinary ways (Oleksenko & Khavina, 2021; Kryvylova, et. al., 2022).

Recent scientific literature that has presented the main theories of emotional intelligence, suggests that emotional intelligence is a complex structure, hence it itself as a

singular structure, its evaluation tools, methods, prediction parameters are described and presented with significant differences (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). In regards of this paper, it has been chosen to theoretically base this research using the Petrides, Furnham, (2001) developed trait emotional intelligence theory, hence this theory is mostly in correlation with the research aim, research question, the importance of developing adaptability as a singular trait for primary school-aged scholars, because this theoretical model is the only one, that distinguishes adaptability as a singular trait (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).

Scientific literature signifies that, both emotional intelligence and inclusive education are becoming more widely and more deeply researched in educational contexts, due to their intervening connection to provide a high-quality education for scholars with various special educational needs (Marzec, 2017). In the context of inclusive education various research had generated conclusions that such scholars due to their specific needs might be in the increased risk of becoming socially excluded, experience learning failures and psychological difficulties, develop inappropriate behavior patterns, negative self-awareness etc. (Fink et. al., 2015; D'Amico & Guastaferrò, 2017; Lereya, et. al., 2022). These factors can also be theoretically linked to one's inability to adapt in educational contexts and their requirements, generating an even greater importance of adaptability trait development for such scholars.

As stated by Marzec (2017) one of the main benefits of inclusive education is to optimize all educational processes for scholars with various special educational needs and ensure their social adaptation. There is significant knowledge gap in scientific literature regarding adaptability trait development for scholars with various special educational needs, hence most of similar research is conducted with the scope one specific area of special needs (sensory, cognitive, physical, etc.), especially autism spectrum disorders (Borisova, 2020; Tenerife, et. al., 2022). This means that is a lack of research data that emphasizes special education needs by degree and not by type. Such data would potentially be more practically implacable for teachers that work in inclusive education contexts. It can be stated that the importance of such research can be described as twofold, firstly, that the adaptability trait development in itself is important not only for scholar's to be successful in educational contexts, but in other daily activities, secondly it is important to scholars with severe

educational needs, hence they lack the ability to adapt in such contexts, there is little to no data present on such development yet.

Furthermore, it is utterly important to signify the choice of physical education classes and their importance of adaptability trait development for scholars with severe special educational needs. Scientific literature has revealed that emotional intelligence can be effectively developed through high quality and healthy social interactions, because emotional intelligence is present not only in inter-personal, but also in the intra-personal levels (Metaj-Macula, 2017). These types of social interactions are beneficial for younger scholars, that develop their abilities, competencies during such and similar social interactions (Kaliska, 2019). Most of such development through social interactions is being conducted through programs or regular physical activity that is effective in developing scholar emotional intelligence (Canabate et. al., 2020; Nurbait & Bastian 2021).

It is for these reasons that it is only logical that physical education classes by themselves are more than appropriate contexts for such social interactions to take place. Such classes are complex in the aspect of both easy and difficult activities, learning is based on both simple and complex movement, both positive and negative emotions are experienced, possibilities to differentiate the educational curricula (Deunk, et. al., 2018; Petsos & Gorozidis, 2019). It is because of such complexity that scholars naturally are being forced to learn how to adapt through working in teams, expressing new movement, controlling their emotional behavior, etc. These statements suggest that scholars only by participating in such classes are open not only to achieve various goals of such classes, but also integrally develop their adaptability trait.

Briefly summarizing the three theoretical questions that were stated in the begging of the literature review it can be stated that the importance of adaptability trait development for scholars with severe special educational needs is signified through their lack of such skills in educational, especially in inclusive education contexts, the benefits of emotional intelligence and the adaptability trait itself, that is greatly useful not only in educational contexts, but also in other daily life activities, the existing lack of knowledge that emphasizes a more vast scope of severe special educational needs scholars and their adaptability trait development, not only focusing on higher-grade scholars, adults, singular type of disabilities and/or special needs.

2. Research methodology

This research is based on qualitative research methodology, more specifically a microethnographic research, which was conducted through 6 *main phases* in which several research methods were implemented, different tasks completed. Note that in this microethnographic research the researcher and the teacher is the same specialist, meaning the research data was selected carefully and with a more in-depth evaluation of how and what should be analyzed and included in the research to effectively achieve its aim and answer the research question.

All codes, sub-themes and themes which were included in the result section are finalized without presenting the whole coding and theme generating process, but with a presentation on how they were chosen which is later on. It is also important to note that based on this research object and aim, the effect, or rather change of the adaptability trait was not measured, hence the focus was primarily on the development process itself and not the result.

During phase 1 of this research the scientific literature was analyzed by using a *method of scientific literature analysis* to develop the theoretical framework of this research. This framework consists of the justification of used trait emotional intelligence theory, research scope, research sample, theoretical background regarding research thesis.

During phase 2 of this research the decisions of how the video data recordings will be collected and the research sample were formulated. These decisions included that the *video recordings* must take place during an *8-month period of a single school year* of 1st grade students in a special education school located in Lithuania, must include whole class members and their activities during physical education classes. These decisions formulated *inclusion and exclusion criteria* to generate the research sample: 1) 1st grade scholars; 2) diagnosed with severe special educational needs; 3) both scholar and his/her parent/guardian freely and voluntarily taking part in the study; 4) is no more than 2 years older or younger than other class members; 5) is physically capable to participate in physical education classes.

During phase 3 of the research, the *researcher sample* has been generated. It consisted of 36 1st grade scholars from 3 different classes aged between 8-9 years old. All these scholars were qualified to take part in the research regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria. All these scholars participated in the research from its beginning till end, which means that no scholars ended their participation in this research early. Everyone of the research participants was given a

certain code to prevent any publication of personal data or sensitive information. The needed legal and ethical documentation and signed approval was also signed in order to ensure that the research fulfills anonymity, confidentiality and ethical requirements.

During phase 4 of the research the main *research data was collected and categorized*. By using a *method of video recording* 111 physical activity classes were recorded. These video recordings were *categorized by inclusion and exclusion criteria* which were generated based on the research aim and research question. These criteria: 1) adaptation trait development through new activities; 2) adaptation trait development in new educational areas; 3) adaptation trait development during new educational contexts; 4) adaptation trait development during social interactions; 5) adaptation trait development during educational contexts that are not traditional and insignificant or typical (games, already performed activities, educational curriculum differentiation). After categorizing the video recordings based on these criteria 637 minutes and 46 seconds of video recordings were considered as significant for the research.

During phase 5 of the research the data was analyzed by 6 phases of the *Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive analysis method*. Regarding these 6 phases, during phase 2 of reflexive thematic analysis the video recordings were *latent coded* using the Huber and Froelich (2020) *method of sequential analysis*. Using a combination of these methods both wide and in-depth analysis of research data was applied, allowing for more robust research evidence and conclusions.

During phase 6 of the research, the results were compared in a scientific discussion and main conclusions were generated.

3. Results

To clearly present the results as themes, firstly they are separated into strictly individual and group development level clusters of themes and sub-themes in tables 2-3. These tables do not represent the relationships between sub-themes and themes, they represent what themes and sub-themes were generated after the finalized coding process. At the end of this result section the theme and sub-theme relationships are presented as a finalized thematic map in figure 1. An example of a coded sequence is presented in table 1. Note

that all sub-themes are generated by using the same coding template, both in individual development level and group development level.

Table 1 part 1. A coding template example table.

| | | |
|---|------------------|---|
| Curricula part: movement skill development. | | |
| Lesson theme: participation in mid-high intensity movement development games. | | |
| Scholar`s goal: to improve movement skills through various game activities. | | |
| Part of the lesson: main. | | |
| Lesson task organization method: frontal. | | |
| Sequence code | Situation | The lesson is taking place outside, but due to challenging weather conditions the scholars are playing a game they know in a unusual educational setting, which includes a different surrounding with trees, shade, no movement zone marking. |
| GH010321 1.0 | Initiated action | The scholars k5, k6, k9 failing to determine the movement zone boundaries without usual markings move away too far from it, so the teacher initiates a social interaction with each scholar separately and helps them to return to the designated movement zone by calling their names and repeating how can they imagine the movement zone boundaries. |
| | Reaction | The scholars demonstrate a non-verbal agreement with the teacher and his said remarks, and accepting his help return to the designated movement zone. |
| | Result | Individual: Students k5, k6, k9 failing to adapt to the new movement zone requirements the teacher seeks to help them, thus creating a sequence in which the students are being provided with individual help on how to adapt to new requirements and demonstrate their understanding of the teachers' said remarks and continue the activity accordingly. |

(Created by author)

This example is also involved in the result analysis as a part of the *individual assistance from teacher* and *main activities* sub-themes.

The individual adaptability trait development level result analysis has revealed that there are 6 sub-themes which contribute to generating of 4 main themes. These sub-themes indicate that during physical education classes for scholars with severe educational needs it is possible to develop adaptability trait in the individual level by: 1) receiving individual

assistance both from the teacher and other classmates in order to fulfill the new or changing requirements of activities or educational areas. 2) Using indirect examples of other classmates by generating experience when passively watching other social interactions with are oriented towards adapting to new or changing requirements of activities or educational areas. 3) Participating in various intensity and structure activities throughout the different phases of the lesson.

Table 2. Adaptability trait development at individual level.

| Sub-theme | Sub-theme code | Theme | Theme code |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Individual assistance from teacher; | IAS1 | Individual level development; | IAT1 |
| Individual assistance from classmates; | IAS2 | Individual work; | IAT2 |
| Indirect example; | IAS3 | Group work; | IAT3 |
| Warm-up activities; | IAS4 | Failure assessment. | IAT4 |
| Main activities; | IAS5 | | |
| Ending activities. | IAS6 | | |

(Created by author)

The themes generated from these corresponding sub-themes indicate that scholars with severe special educational needs can participate in physical education class activities and both integrally develop their adaptability trait on a individual level by working individually, working in a group with an individual task, assessing individual failure. The result analysis of the group level adaptation trait development has revealed that there are 7 sub-themes that contribute to the development of 3 themes. These sub-themes indicate adaptation trait development in a group manner can be achieved by: 1) receiving group assistance from the teacher or classmates while participating in new activities or new educational contexts, settings. 2) When participating in a new activity or educational context as a whole group, while constantly interacting with one another. 3) Using previous individual or group classmate behavior examples on how to adapt to certain activities or educational contexts. 4) During various intensity activities throughout different phases of the lesson.

Table 3. Adaptability trait development at group level.

| Sub-theme | Sub-theme code | Theme | Theme code |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Group assistance from teacher; | GAS1 | Group level development; | GAT1 |
| Group assistance from classmate; | GAS2 | New educational setting; | GAT2 |
| All class scholar interaction; | GAS3 | New task assessment. | GAT3 |
| Previous examples; | GAS4 | | |
| Warm-up activities; | GAS5 | | |
| Main activities; | GAS6 | | |
| Ending activities. | GAS7 | | |

(Created by author)

The result analysis has revealed that the 3 themes indicating scholar with severe special educational needs adaptability trait development on the group level is possible by participating in activities which the whole class are taking part in new educational settings, assessing the requirements of new tasks and/or activities.

Analyzing the finalized thematic relationships, it has been revealed that themes of individual and group levels are not only singular factors that lead to adaptability trait development, but also are intervened and form connections that overlap, thus creating a vast amount of sequences during social interactions that can be created in order to integrally develop the mentioned trait. Note that themes IAT1 and GAT1 are not being analyzed as they only demonstrate connections between the rest of individual and group level themes.

The results have revealed various settings that were met in order to individually develop one's adaptability trait. Individual development theme IAT2 is in relationship with theme IAT4. This connection signifies that scholars performing individual tasks may encounter sequences during which they evaluate and assess their failure to adapt to certain conditions or requirements and this reflective approach benefits for their adaptability trait development.

Analyzing the results of group level adaptability trait development, it has been revealed that the themes GAT2 and GAT3 are connected. This relationship signifies, that scholars participating in new educational settings, such as untraditional movement zones, different weather, different peers working together, etc., also experience the requirement to assess

new tasks that are formed in those settings and vice versa. These requirements might include new movements, new methods to form teams, understanding of unmarked movement zones, etc.

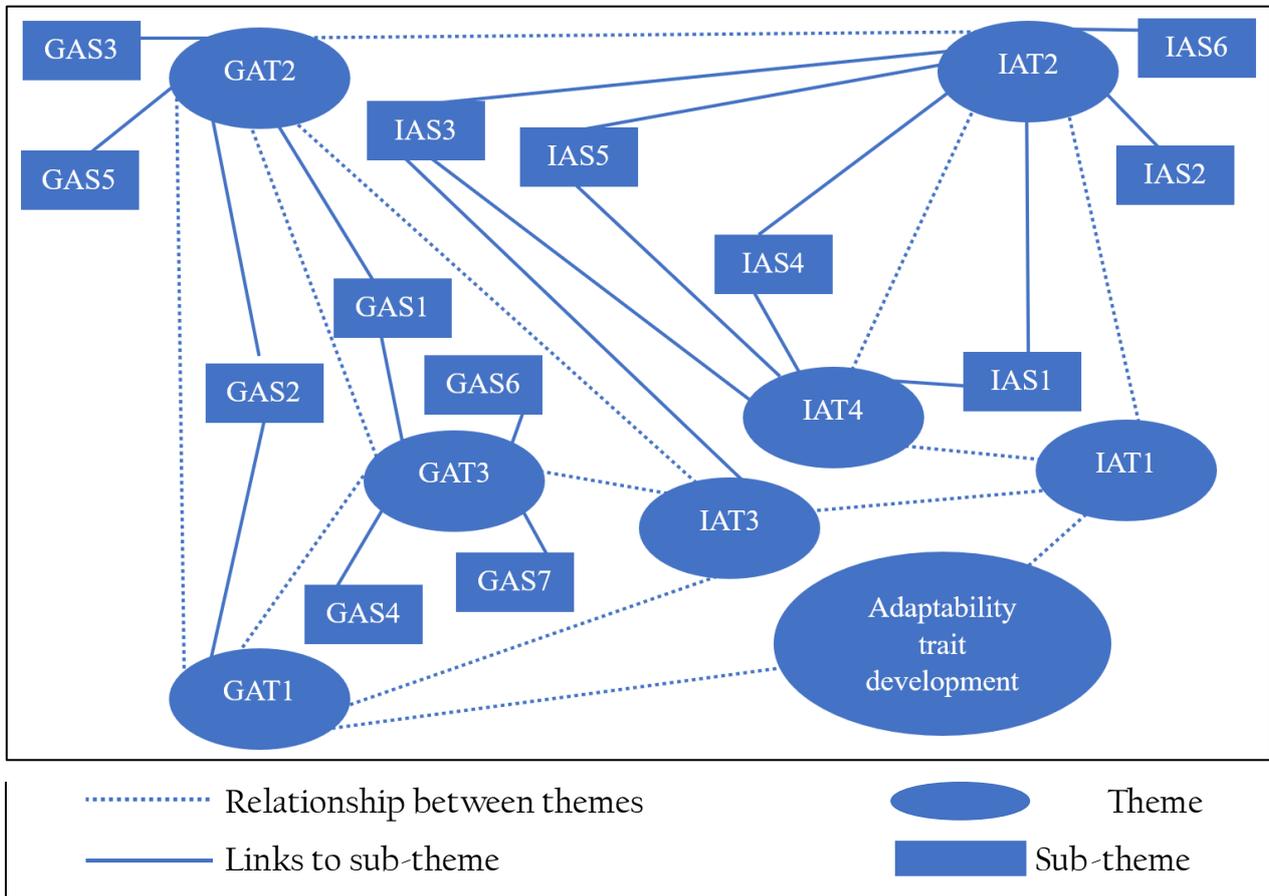


Fig. 1. Finalized thematic map demonstrating 7 adaptability trait development themes.

Created by author

The result analysis has revealed that individual development theme IAT2 is in relationship with group development theme GAT2. Which means that scholars participating as a group in a new educational setting perform individual tasks, during which they experience various social interactions to help them develop their adaptability trait.

Individual development theme IAT3 is in relationship with group development themes GAT2, GAT3. This connection indicates that scholars working in groups, but performing individual tasks also both individually and as a group take part in new educational settings, new task assessments. During such activities scholars form sequences

during which they create social interactions that help them manage those tasks and integrally develop their adaptability trait.

4. Discussion

Firstly, it is important to note that the coding process has revealed descriptive similarities between the research sample and other research, that revealed that children with special educational needs are in the increased risk of becoming socially excluded, experience learning failures and psychological difficulties, develop inappropriate behavior patterns, negative self-awareness etc. (Fink et. al., 2015; D'Amico & Guastaferro, 2017; Lereya, et al., 2022). This research can partly support these claims, because as stated earlier, these results might be connected with the lack of skills to adapt in various social, educational contexts and during our coding process several sequences (codes) were formed and clustered with sub-themes in a theme IAT4 in cohesion with these claims. These codes that led to the manifestation of the sub-theme signify that this research sample had difficulties adapting in new educational and social contexts expressing psychological difficulties, inappropriate behavior, expressing negative self-talk, etc.

Secondly, our research supports the claims made by Deunk et. al., (2018), Petsos & Gorozidis (2019), that physical education classes are complex in the aspect of easy and difficult activities, learning is based on simple and complex movement, both positive and negative emotions are experienced, possibilities to differentiate the educational curricula. During the coding and theme formatting processes of this research it has been discovered that physical education classes merely by new movement teaching is a vast context to create emotional experiences, experiences of success and failure while adapting to new task or educational requirements, learning. The diversity of such lessons can be drawn out in themes IAT2, IAT3, GAT2, GAT3 and their corresponding sub-themes that indicate various activities, experiences created through them, possibilities to adapt.

Thirdly, as this research revealed the positive relationships between the complexity of physical education classes and adaptability trait development it is also important to identify the relationship between physical education classes activities and social interactions as a singular complex for adaptability trait development. As stated earlier emotional intelligence is widely developed through high quality and healthy social interactions, because

emotional intelligence is present not only in inter-personal, but also in the intra-personal levels and that such social interactions are extremely beneficial for younger scholars especially during physical activity (Metaj-Macula, 2017; Kaliska, 2019; Nurbait & Bastian 2021). Not only this research sample is consisted of young scholars, the data is collected from physical education classes, but also this data is analyzed in both individual and group adaptability development levels. The research themes IAT1, IAT2, IAT3, IAT4, GAT2, GAT3 and connections between them that are shown in figure 1 identify the importance and effectiveness of social interactions for individual and group adaptability trait development, thus supporting the ideas of Metaj-Macula (2017), Kaliska (2019), Nurbait & Bastian (2021).

In conclusion it can be stated, that there is a significant need for emotional intelligence and its trait adaptability development for young scholars with severe special educational needs to adequately meet current and upcoming challenges that they may face in inclusive education contexts and other life activities. For scholars with severe special educational needs and their possible emotional, social difficulties, physical education classes is an experience rich educational environment for such development to take place, firstly because this discipline is mandatory in all schools, secondly because it can be shifted to be more oriented towards emotional intelligence development without sacrificing any goals or tasks that are presented in the curricula. Furthermore, shifting physical education activities towards a more oriented approach for emotional intelligence and its trait adaptability development, forming adequate social interactions for such development is possible in both individual, group and multidimensional level.

Conclusions

The adaptation trait for scholars with severe special educational needs can be developed on individual, group levels and in some cases multidimensionally. Such development is achieved through various social interactions between scholars themselves and scholars and teacher. The later is the most responsible for the quality of the quality of the adaptability trait development process, hence the teacher not only controls the contents of the lesson which generate various social interactions, but also controls every social interaction that is happening during the lesson.

The adaptation trait is developed throughout the whole lesson phases, as it is not the lesson structure, but the activity itself is the most important. The research results revealed that this development process may manifest naturally through simple social interactions. This means that it can be developed integrally, without sacrificing the goals and aims of the curricula, but focusing on what is happening during those social interactions and shifting them, creating new interactions, etc.

Physical education is naturally a preferable educational context for the development of the adaptability trait of scholars with severe special educational needs. The research revealed that such scholars might find it hard to adapt to most new educational settings and/or requirements. The dynamic of physical education classes and activities help them create social interactions and educational contexts, during which they experience processes that requires them to adapt, thus helping them develop their adaptation trait.

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