

VI International Forum on Teacher Education

The Attitude of the Educational Process Participants to Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities

Lyudmila A. Golovchits* (a), Zoya A. Solovieva (b)

(a), (b) *Moscow State Pedagogical University, 119571, Moscow (Russia), 88 Prospect Vernadskogo, golovchits@inbox.ru*

Abstract

Currently, inclusive education is recognized as a tool for the realization of the rights of children with disabilities to education, further socialization and normalization of life. One of the important conditions for inclusive education of children with disabilities is a positive attitude to this form of education of teachers, parents of children with special needs and children with typical development. However, currently there is no clear data on the attitude of teachers and parents to the process of inclusive education. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the factors that determine the nature of the attitude of teachers and parents to inclusive education. Three types of questionnaires were developed: for primary school teachers and preschool teachers, for parents of students with disabilities and for parents of children with typical development. Total number of participants was 190. There was revealed a positive attitude to education of children with disabilities and students with typical development 72% of preschool teachers. However, only 38% of primary school teachers support the ideas and feasibility of co-education of children with disabilities and normally developing students. 50% of parents are generally positive about the possibility of inclusive education for children with disabilities and normally developing children. However, 38% parents, including parents of children with typical development emphasized the option "neutral" in the questionnaires. We can conclude that it is necessary to organize a system of psychological and pedagogical preparation of schools teachers for inclusive education; organize a special education programs for parents of children with and without disabilities. The results of the study can be used in planning a strategy for the development of inclusive education, implementing measures aimed at improving the training of teachers and parents.

Keywords: inclusive education, children with disabilities, special education, psychological and methodological readiness of teachers and parents.

© 2020 Lyudmila A. Golovchits, Zoya A. Solovieva

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2020 (VI International Forum on Teacher Education)

* Corresponding author. E-mail: golovchits@inbox.ru

Introduction

Currently, inclusive education is a recognized tool for the implementation of the rights of children with disabilities to education and further socialization and normalization of life. The introduction of inclusive education marks a new stage of cultural, moral, social and political development of the Russian society. Recognition by the state of the value of the social and educational integration of children with disabilities determined the ongoing changes in the socio-cultural environment that should change the position of the society, which will rethink its attitude towards children with disabilities. Of course, first of all, inclusive education can contribute to social upbringing of a child with developmental disorders that Vygotsky considered the basis of “growing into the civilization”. However, rapid inclusion of the Russian educational system in international standards of education for persons with disabilities became associated with many problems. One of them is the formation of positive attitude of the pedagogical process participants (teachers, parents) and members of the society to co-education of children with developmental disorders and normally developing peers.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze factors that determine the nature of the attitude of teachers and parents towards inclusive education.

Literature review

Improving the system of inclusive education requires a special work to form readiness of all educational process participants. One of the important conditions for inclusive education of children with disabilities is the presence of a positive attitude towards this form of education on the part of teachers, parents of children with disabilities and with normal development. Alekhina et al. (2011; 2015, June, 24–26) notes that at the first stages of inclusive education development there arose a sharp problem of mass school teachers’ unpreparedness (professional, psychological and methodological) for working with children with special educational needs, and a lack of professional competence of teachers to work in an inclusive environment was found. Alekhina (2015, June, 24–26) developed a three-component model for analyzing the professional readiness of teachers to implement inclusive practices. The theoretical model was based on three main components: the teacher’s knowledge of the developmental features of children with various types of disorders, the degree of emotional acceptance of a child with disabilities, and the level of willingness to interact with them. The structure of psychological readiness is characterized by such components as: emotional acceptance of children with various types of developmental disorders (acceptance-rejection); willingness to include children with various types of disorders in activities during

the lesson (inclusion-isolation); satisfaction with one's own pedagogical activity. One of the important conditions for inclusive education of children with disabilities is the presence of a positive attitude towards this form of education on the part of teachers, parents of children with disabilities and with normal development. However, at present, there is no unambiguous data on the attitude of teachers and parents to the inclusive education process. The materials of various authors cite conflicting facts about the attitude of primary school teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education for children with health limitations (Avdeeva, 2016; Kosikova, 2009; Morgacheva, 2013; Fedorova, 2013). According to Morgacheva (2013), the majority of teachers in general education and correctional schools, as well as parents of ordinary schoolchildren, oppose inclusive education. Parents of children with typical development and parents of children with disabilities have different ideas about the nature and objectives of inclusive education. Parents of children with normal development showed lack of knowledge about the developmental features of children with disabilities (Avdeeva, 2016). According to Morgacheva (2013), despite different points of view and a desire for correctness, the attitude of parents of secondary school students and kindergarten pupils toward "special" children is either neutral or more often negative. They mainly emphasize the limitations and weaknesses of such children. The results of a study performed by Fedorova (2013, August, 12-17) showed that the attitude of primary school teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education for children with health limitations is ambiguous today. The questionnaire data allow talking about the relative acceptance by primary school teachers of the idea of inclusive education for children with special educational needs. Speech pathologists see the difficulties of individual psychological and pedagogical support of children with disabilities due to the lack of preparedness of the educational process participants, especially teachers (Matasov, 2020). This article is aimed at analyzing the attitude of teachers and parents towards inclusive education.

Methodology

Study methods: theoretical methods, including the analysis of the study subject on the basis of the review of philosophical, psychological and pedagogical literature; empirical methods: study of the educational institutions' experience, analysis of regulatory and educational documentation; experimental methods; methods of graphic representation of the results, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of a survey of the educational process participants, verbal conversations, and observations. A personal questionnaire was used as a leading method in the study of this problem, which provided for direct contact between the researcher and the respondent. Three types of questionnaires were developed: for primary school teachers and preschool educational institutions; for correctional specialists (speech pathologists, speech therapists, psychologists); parents of students with disabilities and for parents of children with normal development. The questions included various models of educational situations. The survey was

performed among teachers of primary school and preschool educational institutions, parents of students with disabilities and parents of children with normal development. Table 1 shows data on the number of respondents in various groups.

Table 1. The composition and number of participants in the experiment

Groups of participants	Number of people
Teachers of preschool educational institutions	40
Primary school teachers of general educational institutions	45
Teachers of preschool and school educational institutions carrying out corrective work (speech pathologists, speech therapists, psychologists)	35
Parents of students with disabilities	30
Parents of students with normal development	40
Total	190

Stages of the study. The study was performed in three stages: at the first stage, a theoretical analysis of existing methodological approaches in philosophical and psychological scientific literature, theory and methodology of pedagogical studies was performed; the problem, purpose, and study methods were identified, an experimental study plan was drawn up, and questionnaires were developed for participants in three groups. At the second stage, surveys were performed for general preschool and primary school teachers, and correctional specialists (speech pathologists, speech therapists, psychologists). At the third stage, the study was performed with parents of children attending general schools both with and without developmental disorders.

Experimental base of the study. Preschool and school educational institutions of Moscow served as experimental base for the study.

Results

We will review data from the survey of preschool and primary school teachers in general education institutions, and correctional specialists (Table 2).

Seventy two percent of teachers of preschool educational institutions showed a generally positive attitude towards the joint education of children with disabilities and their normally developing peers. The number of teachers who expressed a negative attitude towards the joint education of children with developmental challenges together with normally developing preschool children was only 3%. Teachers of preschool institutions find inclusive education and training of children with developmental disabilities useful both from the point of view of the development of this group of preschool children and from the point of view of the formation of positive relations between children. However, only 38% of primary school teachers expressed positive attitude and willingness to work with children with disabilities in the settings of inclusive education.

Table 2. The attitude of teachers towards inclusive education for children with disabilities

Levels	Preschool teachers	Special teachers (speech therapists, speech pathologists, psychologists)	Primary school teachers
Positive	72	67	38
Negative	3	15	13
Neutral	25	18	49

In the context of inclusive education, teachers faced certain difficulties, and in some cases, the unpreparedness to co-educate students with normal development and students with disabilities. The problem of lacking understanding of the developmental features of children with disabilities has been identified. During the survey, some teachers of educational institutions expressed their concerns: “What will I do with such a child if he/she gets to my class?” Those respondents who have experience in co-education of children with disabilities and children without developmental challenges noted that

“everything depends on the individual characteristics of the child”. Reviewing the willingness of teachers to work with children with disabilities depending on the category, it can be concluded that the most “preferred” for joint work in an inclusive class are pupils with visual, hearing, speech, and musculoskeletal disorders; to the least extent teachers are willing to work with children with mental disorders. Regarding this category there were categorical statements: “these children are uneducable,” “they have no place in a general educational institution.” Significant difficulties arise when teaching children with mental retardation. If we talk about children with multiple disorders, then teachers of general educational institutions demonstrate impotence and unwillingness to work with them. To the question of the questionnaire, do primary school teachers use adapted basic educational programs for primary general education recommended for various groups of children with special educational needs, 30% of teachers answered positively, 20% of teachers develop individual programs for each student with special needs adhering to the recommendations of specialists. 50% of the teachers participating in the survey use a basic general education program, which may be a factor of too strict requirements to a child with health limitations. During conversations, the teachers complained of the lack of adequate number of specialists in schools who can help arrange and select the content of teaching, mastering the technologies necessary for teaching children with developmental disorders, and conducting individual classes necessary for such children (speech pathologists, speech therapists, and tutors). According to the teachers, teaching children with disabilities in a regular school is complicated by the lack of textbooks, teaching materials, and the provision of the services of an assistant who provides students with the necessary technical assistance. To a certain extent, psychological and methodological readiness to work with children with disabilities in primary school depends on the work experience of teachers. It turned out that there is a correlation between the experience of teachers and their attitude to the inclusive education of children with disabilities: the longer is the work experience, the more often a negative attitude towards inclusive education is reported. Forty-five percent of primary school teachers with a work experience of 15 to 40 years showed a negative attitude towards the joint education of children with disabilities. During survey, they talked about the desire to return the previous years’ organization of education, when correctional institutions had speech pathologists, who could properly respond to the educational needs of children with health limitations. All 15% of teachers with a work experience of 1 to 5 years showed a positive attitude towards co-education of children with developmental disorders with their normal peers. Seventy percent of teachers expressed their opinion about the greater degree of effectiveness of teaching children with disabilities in educational institutions with the possibility of creating mixed classes/groups in which there is an opportunity of co-education of children with and without health limitations under the guidance of speech pathologists, which, from their point of view, is the most consistent with the idea of inclusion. Eighty-five percent of teachers of preschool and school general educational institutions, as well as teachers engaged in corrective work,

reported a lack of knowledge in the field of corrective pedagogy. Only 8% of teachers in public schools received retraining in the field of technologies for working with children with health limitations.

To be effective, inclusive education requires joint directed interaction of all educational process participants, especially parents and teachers. Our survey of parents of both students with disabilities and their normally developing peers (70 people) showed that parents generally have a positive attitude towards the possibility of co-education of children with disabilities and those with normal development. Inclusion is supported by 50% of parents, and only 12% are against such education. However, 38% of parents, including parents of children without developmental disorders, found it difficult to express their attitude to the problem of joint education, checking the option “neutral” in the questionnaire. Parents of students with an autism spectrum disorder and severe multiple disorders expressed their negative attitude towards inclusive education. A more positive attitude was found in parents of children with hearing, vision, and speech disorders. The attitude of parents of children with disabilities to co-education is determined primarily by the capabilities of their child and depends on how well in advance the work with the child was started, and whether the joint work of the correctional teacher and parents is fully ensured.

The interaction of parents of a child studying in an inclusive class with teachers is an important component of the student’s education effectiveness. Despite the frequent communication of teachers with parents, teachers are dissatisfied with the participation of parents in the education of their children. According to the survey, 63% of teachers of general educational institutions believe that the majority of parents of children with disabilities exert too strict requirements to their children, not understanding the features of the child’s development, and do not participate in the learning process, assuming that this work is entirely the responsibility of teachers. Thirty-seven percent of teachers surveyed do not experience difficulties when working with parents who are actively involved in teaching the child, working in tandem with a teacher. Parents of children with disabilities studying in inclusion classes have some concerns, which they expressed during the individual survey: poor performance of the child with disabilities in mastering the program (45% of the respondents), lack of an individual approach to their child (30%); difficulty of communication the child in a class/group (15% of the respondents). Ten percent of parents of children with developmental disabilities are concerned about the employment of their children and getting a profession by them after inclusive education (Table 3).

Table 3. Concerns of parents of children with disabilities studying in an inclusive class

Concerns of parents	Level
Program underperformance	45
Lack of individual approach	30
Socialization in a class/group	15
Future professional employment	10

Speaking about the most effective educational institution for teaching children with disabilities, 75% of the parents surveyed supported the idea of organizing educational institutions with the possibility of creating combined compensating groups/classes. Twelve percent of the parents expressed a desire to bring back special (correctional) institutions for teaching children with disabilities, and 13% spoke for general educational institutions in the context of inclusion, where 1-2 children with disabilities study in a regular class/group.

Discussions

Discussion of the results. As an analysis of the study showed, currently, a significant part of the pedagogical process participants does not possess sufficient information on inclusive education, is not willing to participate in the lives of people with disabilities, and does not accept them as they are. This situation arises due to the insufficient representation in the media of the problem of access to general education for all children and lack of purposeful formation in all public and educational institutions of a positive attitude and a desire to help people with disabilities and health limitations by any available means. A systematic, focused work is needed to build people's knowledge of the need to provide accessible education for all children, regardless of the nature and severity of developmental disorders. This process should be two-way: on the one hand, the society should be interested in educating people with challenges with a view to their further available employment, social integration, and prevention of various types of deviant behavior. This implies a wide coverage of the problems of education of children with disabilities in the media, of the importance of their integration into the environment of their peers, of their peculiarities and capabilities, which, as we know, can be unique in terms of artistic creativity and education. On the other hand, educational institutions (administration and employees of schools, kindergartens, universities)

should support education of these people in a kindergarten and a school by working with the teaching staff and parents, using all possible ways to increase psychological and methodological preparedness of teachers for inclusive education through advanced training and retraining of specialists, planning school and non-school activities for children with disabilities and their peers with the participation of teachers, parents, and parties concerned.

The humanistic component of inclusive education, which is meant to prevent the phenomena of segregation and fully contribute to the positive attitude of normally developing children towards children with disabilities, has undeniable importance in the process of inclusive education (Matasov, 2020). According to the author, under no circumstances will it be possible to create such educational conditions in an ordinary public school that would correspond to the educational needs and capabilities of both normally developing children and children with disabilities. In our opinion, this approach is debatable, because the experience of a number of schools in Russia shows the effectiveness of co-education of children with and without disabilities (Yamburg, 1997).

Our data are consistent with the opinion of Nazarova (2018), that along with the technical preparation of the future teacher for work in an inclusive education environment and the formation of professional competencies, there should be formed value orientations and personal qualities related to understanding the human value of each student regardless of the presence and severity of developmental disorders, as well as awareness of teacher's responsibility for the translation of social values and available academic knowledge, and the inclusion of the child into the society. Among the personal qualities that a teacher needs, it is important to accept the child as they are, with all their problems and achievements, and have faith in their ability to develop and compensate for impaired functions.

Conclusion

Thus, our study has showed various types of attitude of teachers and parents towards the inclusive education of children with disabilities: from the full adoption of this form of education through a neutral attitude to a sharply negative one. Currently, the main factors influencing the nature of the relationship between teachers and parents are the insufficient level of personal and professional preparedness of teachers, the insufficient number of specialists who can arrange the support and education of children with special needs in public schools, and the lack of program-and-methodical literature for public schools teachers to work with children with disabilities. Teachers of general education schools and parents expressed the opinion that it is necessary to establish institutions with a combined focus, which can be oriented both on preschool and school education and include different types of psychological and

pedagogical support for students with developmental disorders. Under these conditions, it becomes possible to effectively include all children with disabilities in the educational process, taking into account the level of development of each child and choosing a model of inclusive education that is useful and possible for them while maintaining the necessary qualified specialized assistance.

References

- Alekhina, S. V., Alekseyeva, M. N., & Agafonova, Ye. L. (2011). Readiness of teachers as the main factor of success of inclusive process in education. *Psychological science and education*, (1), 83-92.
- Alekhina, S. V. (2015, June, 24–26). *The main issue of inclusive education development at the current stage*. Inclusive education: results, experience and prospects [Paper presentation]. III International Scientific and Practical Conference, Moscow: MGPPU, 20-24.
- Avdeeva, T. N. (2016). The problem of psychological readiness of parents of different categories of children for inclusive education. *Siberian pedagogical journal*, (4), 112-119.
- Fedorova, T. A. (2013, August, 12-17). *Attitude of primary school teachers to inclusive education for children with disabilities* [Paper presentation]. Innovations in science: collection of articles at the XXVII international science-prakt.conf., 24(11), 156-163.
- Kosikova, L. V. (2009). Inclusive education: the attitude of parents and teachers to inclusive education. *North-Caucasian psychological Bulletin*, 1(7), 69-73.
- Matasov, Yu. T. (2020). Inclusive project: limits of a reasonable embodiment. *Journal of Special Education Defectology*, (1), 18-24.
- Morgacheva, E. N. (2013). Inclusive education by the eyes of teachers and parents. *Bulletin of RSGU. Series: Psychology. Pedagogy. Education*, (18), 226-238.
- Nazarova, N. M. (2018). *Phenomenology of co-education: integration and inclusion*. Moscow: Pero.
- Yamburg, E. A. (1997). *School for All: An Adaptive Model* (Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implementation). Moscow: New school.