

FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN RUSSIAN SCHOOLS: REGIONAL ASPECT

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Abstract. In modern world as well as in modern Russia there is an increase in the number of children with special needs. For these reasons special needs education has always been of importance both in developed and in developing countries. In 1950s in these institutions special conditions have been created for the education of children with disabilities. Psychologists, doctors, special educators work with such children. Meanwhile, the experience of teaching children with disabilities in special educational institutions has shown a number of shortcomings: firstly, in many respects these children were isolated from the society, their socialization took place in an artificial environment specially created for them where there was a lack of communication with healthy children. Secondly, this led to a lack of competitiveness of children with disabilities in comparison with healthy children in the educational market. Thirdly, it was believed that children with disabilities were indifferent to education and were not able to learn as successfully as others. Fourthly, there was the lack of tolerance towards disabled people in many countries, including Russia, that led to the division of society into healthy and disabled people, and to the segregation of the latter. To eliminate these shortcomings in the 1990s, inclusive education was implemented in the education systems of Western countries. In the Russian education system, inclusive education began to be implemented in 2010.

The purpose of the research is to study the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools of one of the largest regions of Russia - the Sverdlovsk region.

The research methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The primary data was collected using questionnaires and focus-groups. 2800 respondents took part in the questionnaire survey (1000 schoolchildren' parents and 1,800 teachers of regional schools). 5 focus groups were conducted with teachers involved in the process of inclusive education.

The methodological basis of the study was the structural-functional approach to the analysis of inclusive education and factor analysis.

Implementation of inclusive education in the majority of the region school is quite difficult. Meanwhile, the study has shown that 53.0% of the teachers work in classes where children with special needs and children with disabilities study together with healthy children \ children without HIA (Health Impact Assessment) and, therefore, face issues in implementing it in regular education settings. 47.7% of them approve of the inclusive education implementation. 40.0% of respondents are indifferent to this situation, 5.9% of teachers give a negative assessment of this situation, 6.2% find it difficult to assess it. The majority of healthy children's parents (74.8%) give a negative assessment of inclusive education. They see only the disadvantages of such an education for their children. 30.0% parents of children with special needs see the benefits of inclusive education for their children.

The study has revealed territorial differences in the attitudes of respondents towards inclusive education. Teachers working in rural schools (58.5%) and parents of children living in rural areas (60.0%) are more loyal to the inclusive education.

The study has determined the key group of objective (zero tolerance of the society in relation to children with disabilities; unavailability of the school to introduce inclusive education; mass media) and subjective (teachers' unavailability to introduce inclusive education; parents' unavailability to co-educate healthy children and children with disabilities; zero tolerance of healthy children to children with HIA) factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in schools in the region.

The study has led to the conclusion that the key factor affecting the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools in the region is the need to organize professional training for most teachers in implementing inclusive education.

Keywords: inclusive education, factors, teachers, parents, healthy children, children with disabilities, Russia

Introduction

The emergence of the system of inclusive education in the 1990's is, on the one hand, an important step towards the elimination of discrimination against healthy children and children with special needs (HIA), and, on the other hand, it entails numerous issues for teachers, children and their parents. Meanwhile, a policy of inclusive education is generally understood around the world as part of a human rights agenda that demands access to, and equity in, education for all social groups. F. Armstrong and L. Barton note that "Inclusive education (IE) becomes and remains as a leading idea which has inspired a lot of educational institutions and educators to initiate

projects to transform cultures and procedures in schools for diversity" (Barton L. and Armstrong, F., 2007). The requirements of inclusive society are human rights, equality, justice, and struggle against segregation. All these values play a central role in inclusive educational policy and practice. The history of inclusive education dates back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which emphasizes that everyone has the right to education. The issues of inclusive education have been discussed at various conferences and forums (United Nations, 1993, UNESCO, 1994, United Nations, 2006 etc.). In Russia inclusive education as a phenomenon has appeared fairly recently. Transformation of the education system which started at the beginning of the XXI century facilitated the development of new types of schools and resulted in the emergence of the inclusive education phenomenon in Russia. Russia has adopted an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers to the education system (Federal Law No. 419-FZ of December 1, 2014).

In the last thirty years an increasing interest in the concept of inclusive education has been observed in professional publications of various scientific disciplines. Psychologists pay much attention to characters of disabled children, their skills and their social activities (Guskey R.T., 2013 etc.). Within the framework of the theory of social learning, A. Bandura states that people' learning is largely determined by the processes of modeling, observation and imitation. This is especially important for children with disabilities who, interacting with healthy children, acquire the necessary skills and abilities (Bandura, A., 1977). Many teachers, such as Tony Booth, have been writing persistently about the need to reject special education and replace it with explorations of the processes of exclusion and inclusion for all. "Inclusive pedagogy", is that inclusive education is distinguished by an acceptance of differences between schoolchildren as ordinary aspects of human development" (Booth, T., 1998). According to L. Florian, "... children with disabilities should have access to various forms of educational services, where the individual needs of each schoolchildren should be met" (Florian, L., 2008, 13). It should be noted that in the West, numerous psychological and sociological studies have recently been conducted, in which inclusive education is often viewed as a kind of integration process of "transferring" disabled children from special schools to general education schools (Vincett. K., Cremin H., and Thomas G., 2005), the mainstream process. Speaking about the issue of integration, S. Forlin notes that inclusive education can be considered as a tool for improving schools not only from the point of view of academic issues, but also in social aspects. ... to turn schools into the best places both for classes and education, and for social activities (Forlin, C., 2001). J. Smith in the

mainstream model identified three elements that should characterize it: continuity of types of services for schoolchildren with disabilities, reduction in the number of children “excluded” from regular classes, and an increase in the provision of special services in regular classrooms, rather than in specialized rooms (Smith J.D., 1998). Russian scholars also pay attention to the issues of implementing inclusive education in the country (Grunt E., 2018, Borodkina O.I., 2014, Romanov P. V., Iarskaia-Smirnova E. R, 2005 and others).

Although the inclusive education has already been studied rather extensively this phenomenon, however, requires further study. To the best of our knowledge, the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in modern Russia still remain to be revealed.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

The purpose of the research is to study the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education at schools of the Sverdlovsk region.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study was the structural-functional approach to the analysis of inclusive education and factor analysis.

The research methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The primary data was collected using questionnaires and focus-groups. 1000 children’s parents (healthy children’s and disabled children’s parents) and 1800 school teachers in the Sverdlovsk region were questioned on the basis of quota sampling. Focus-groups (5) were organized for the educators engaged in the system of inclusive education on a regular basis. The focus-groups were conducted in order to identify key issues of inclusive education.

Results / Findings

The analysis of factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education at Russian schools seems to be a very important aim of sociological analyses, as it may allow the future development to be predicted. The study revealed a number of factors affecting this process.

One of the important groups of factors, which affected the implementation of inclusive education in schools, was zero tolerance of the society in relation to children with disabilities and disabled children. 60.0% of teachers and 78.0% the disabled children parents note this fact.

Unavailability of the school to introduce inclusive education also has an impact on its implementation. The majority of the respondents (about 75.0%) note a lack of conditions for its realization in a number of schools in the region. The survey has found that the respondents had the lowest grade of material (67.0% - teachers, 80.0% - children’s parents with disabilities), technical (69.6% - teachers, 80.0% - children’s parents), methodological and

educational-methodological (75.0% - teachers) conditions, as well as the quality of the conditions for implementing inclusive education in general (72.7%). A higher rating was given to the teaching staff. For half (51%) of the respondents, the quality of teaching service was shown to be a significant condition. The study has revealed territorial differences, the teachers who live in Yekaterinburg and large cities of the region (30.0%) state that they are the most discontent with the mentioned indicators of inclusive education. As for territorial differences, the greatest discontent with the above mentioned indicators of inclusive education was found among teachers living in Yekaterinburg and large cities of the Sverdlovsk region. Such a situation can be explained by the fact that they were first teachers to face school implementation of inclusive education, and, therefore, earlier than the teachers living in other areas of the region. Even in schools in Yekaterinburg, it began to be realized for the last two years. Mass-media is one of the important factors influencing both the implementation of inclusive education in Russian schools and negative attitudes of the society towards disabled children (about 50.0%). Unavailability of teachers to introduce inclusive education is one of the key factors group influencing this process. This was indicated by 70.0% of the respondents. Meanwhile, the study has shown that 53.0% of the teachers work in classes where children with special needs and healthy children \ children without HIA (Health Impact Assessment) train together and, therefore, face issues in implementing it in regular education settings. The study has shown that these factors are of more physical nature which appears in the form of time, resources and system of teachers' training. 73.8% of the respondents-teachers noted that they need more time and effort to prepare for working with classes in which children with special needs and disabled children study with children who do not have health restrictions. 45.9% of the respondents mentioned that there were no common approaches to assessing the educational achievements of children with special needs and disabled children. 33.6% of the respondents stated that they were not qualified for working with special needs children and disabled children. The study has convincingly confirmed Forlin's opinion that "the lack of knowledge of teachers related to the lack of education is one of the main obstacles to education in the field of integration and inclusion" (Forlin, C., 2001, 238). The presence of resource issues in the implementation of inclusive education in schools in Moscow and in Kazakhstan was indicated by research workers of Moscow (Romanov P. V., Iarskaia-Smirnova E. R., 2005) and of Karaganda (Denivarova B.V. and M.K. Abdresheva, 2015). This fact indicates the common issues of Russia and Kazakhstan on the way of inclusive education implementation. It is worth noting that in the post-

Soviet space in the former Soviet republics in the past decade, the process of implementing inclusive education in educational organizations has begun. To be more exact, the lack of teachers and narrow-profile specialists are one of the important factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in Russian schools. About 70.0% of the respondents mentioned that there was a lack of narrow-profile specialists (psychologists, social educators, teachers' assistants, etc.), especially at the schools of small towns and rural environments at the majority of regional schools. Our study has confirmed the results of a study conducted in schools in the UK in 2010 by English scholars (A. Avramidis and P. Beilis, 2000).

Unavailability of parents to co-educate healthy children and children with disabilities is one of the main factors affecting the implementation of inclusive educations in regional schools. The study has revealed that the majority of healthy children's parents (74.8%) give a negative assessment of inclusive education. They see only the disadvantages of such an education for their children. 30.0% parents of children with special needs see the benefits of inclusive education for their children. .Every third parent tries to hide the fact that his/her child has health issue.

Zero tolerance of healthy children to children with HIA can be considered as one of key factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in schools in the region. 70.0% of parents of disabled children and 55.0% of teachers noted this fact.

In this study, we have attempted to elucidate some group of factors, which affected the implementation of inclusive education in contemporary Russian schools. We believe that our findings are promising and should be validated using a larger sample.

Conclusion / Discussion

The research has revealed that inclusive education is a new phenomenon in the Russian education system. It began to be introduced in schools in the last five years. The survey has established that the implementation of inclusive education at the majority of regional schools is rather difficult.

Comparative studies show that, despite the earlier implementation of inclusive education in Europe (Great Britain, Spain, etc.) and in the United States, that in these countries, its implementation comes with overcoming certain difficulties.

The study has determined the key group of objective (zero tolerance of the society in relation to children with disabilities; unavailability of the school to introduce inclusive education; mass media) and subjective (unavailability of teachers to introduce inclusive education; unavailability of parents to co-educate healthy children and children with disabilities; zero tolerance of

healthy children to children with HIA) factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education in schools in the region.

The study has elucidated that the majority of teachers need further training in the implementation of inclusive education, which is one of the main factors negatively affecting its implementation.

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