

Teaching Staff Training for Work in the Context of Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the considered problem is substantiated by the extension of inclusive education in the world and the necessity to train highly qualified teaching staff possessing a profound level of theoretical and practical preparation, tolerant and empathic to those having special needs. The objective of the article is to study the issue of teaching staff training for work in the context of inclusive education. The leading research methods are: questioning, observation, analysis. The authors have carried-out the questioning of school teachers, tutors of preschool educational institutions, higher school teachers, analyzed the current situation, revealed teachers' attitude to work in an inclusive educational institution, their shortcomings as professionals. The questioning results allowed to elaborate the program of advanced training courses aimed to regard every side of vocational training: theoretical, psychological, practical and cultural. The presented program may be useful for teachers starting their work with special needs children in the context of inclusive education and for higher school students' vocational training.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive education, a program, advanced training courses, teachers, persons with special needs

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 December 2015
Revised 19 January 2016
Accepted 11 February 2016

Introduction

Urgency of the problem

Education as a historical, sociocultural process reflects the state of this or that society within the specific period of development, its problems, tendencies, valuable orientations (Vasilyev & Shturba, 2009; Drozdova, 2003).

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The recent years have marked out the tendency in modern education for coeducation of disabled children, children with language, racial and other peculiarities and children without special educational needs. Such education has got the name inclusive education (Alyokhina & Semago, 2010; Armstrong, 2003; Rieser, 2013).

Inclusive education has gained ground in many countries due to its support by various members of the society (Malofeyev, 1996; Sukhoterina, 2013; Mengual-Andrés et al., 2015).

Inclusive education assumes to create appropriately adapted educational environment and to render supporting services, but not just to provide the right to attend educational institutions (Akhmetzyanova, 2014; Hodkinson, 2010, Loreman, 2010).

One of necessary conditions to realize inclusive education effectively is teaching staff training. The performance of this condition will allow to solve truly and competently the issues of teaching persons with special educational needs (Bartolo, 2010; Alekhina, 2013).

But now there is an urgent problem concerning the training and retraining of experts working in the system of preschool, school and higher school inclusive education of persons with special needs (Pijl, 2010; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014).

According to statistical data, at the beginning of 2014-2015 academic year there were enrolled 4308 disabled students at vocational secondary education institutions, and 5179 people at higher education institutions. Whereas in 2013-2014 academic year the number of such persons made 4456 and 5194 students respectively, and in 2012-2013 academic year – 5185 and 5530 people. The analysis of statistics revealed the tendency towards the decrease of the enrolled. Some education institutions refuse to enroll disabled applicants as they have not got appropriate conditions to teach such persons (Akhmetzyanova, 2014; Alekhina, 2013).

This tendency is connected not only with difficulties of arranging the so-called barrier-free environment, but, first of all, with issues of social character as well. They include widespread stereotypes and prejudices; readiness or refusal of teachers, children and their parents to accept new principles of education; the lack of systematic, complex psychology and pedagogical knowledge and technologies, special monitoring researches directly concerning the experience of inclusive education. The important characteristic of inclusive education development at this stage is insufficient vocational training of teachers working in general education institutions and experts of support capable to realize the inclusive approach (Akhmetzyanova, 2014; Mukhopadhyay, 2014; O'Corman & Drudy, 2010).

One of the important and necessary working conditions in the inclusive space is additional training of teachers for work in the inclusive environment (Sigurdardóttir, 2010; Nimante, & Tubele, 2010).

The additional goal of teachers' training is the need to gain knowledge about psychophysiological features of persons of this category, specificity of obtaining-transmission of educational information, application of special technical aids in regard to different nosology and age.

Highly qualified teachers aware of psychology-medical-pedagogical foundations of disabled children training, mastering modern methods and techniques to work

with special needs children, possessing valuable personality qualities make the basis of the inclusion (Southerland & Gess-Newsome, 1999; Malofeyev, 1996).

Methodological Framework

Many scientists and researchers (Rieser, 2013; Loreman, 2010; Sharma et al., 2015; Symes & Humphrey, 2011; Kirch et al., 2005; Kagan & Shmidt, 2011; Brandon & Charlton, 2011; Akhmetzyanova, 2015) deal with the issues of inclusive education, training and education of special needs children, teachers staff training to work in the context of inclusive education with children having various development disorders.

At present there have been conducted many researches concerning teachers' attitude to inclusive practice introduction. According to A.De Bojer, S. Dzh. Pijl & A.Minnajert (2011) most teachers have neutral or negative attitude to inclusion.

The researches of B.Kagan & M. Shmidt (2011) testify that teachers' attitude to inclusion depends on the type of pupils' disability.

The lack of special competences of teachers' activity in the inclusive educational environment, and the availability of psychological barriers and professional stereotypes has been found out (Akhmetzyanova, 2014).

Vocationalill-preparedness of the teaching staff is the main problem of inclusion development in education today; the elaboration of a certain system focused on studying and distribution of successful experience is of great importance at present (Alekhina, 2013).

Therefore, the primary and major stage of the education system preparation to implement the process of inclusion is the stage of experts' psychological and professional competences level changes.

According to some reviews, many teachers note their unavailability to work in the context of inclusion due to the lack of interest, fear of a new form of work and high responsibility (Sukhoterina, 2013).

T.Brandon & D.Charlton (2011) specify the necessity to train teachers for inclusive education. In particular, they speak about the creation of Centers where pedagogical skills of teachers working with disabled or special needs school children will be improved.

The research conducted in the Netherlands shows teachers' negative attitude to inclusion (Pijl, 2010). Examinees referred to the lack of knowledge about personal features of such children and shortage of skills to train them, i.e. things that were not paid full-fledged attention to in the course of their vocational education.

In their works E.O'Corman & Sh.Drudy (2010) maintain the idea of teachers' training to work with physically challenged individuals.

In this regard we have conducted the survey of preschool, secondary school and higher education pedagogical staff to find out shortcomings and difficulties of their vocational training to work in inclusive educational institutions, to reveal their attitude towards persons with special needs. Due to the results of the survey there have been singled out the main reasons of "vocational difficulties"; taking them into consideration there has been worked out the program of advanced training courses for tutors, teachers and lectures planning to work in the context of inclusive education.

Results

Researchers showed that there is a problem of training teachers to work with disabled people and persons with special needs; in particular, it concerns mechanisms to provide the teaching staff for inclusive vocational education of disabled people and persons with special needs (Rieser, 2013; Akhmetzyanova, 2014, Alekhina, 2013).

According to the results of preschool teaching employees' questioning it was revealed that 20% of preschool teachers consider themselves ready to work in the context of inclusive education, 10% of tutors do not agree to work in these conditions. Most of tutors (70%) are ready to work in inclusive groups of nursery schools, but they experience a lot of difficulties. The following, in their opinion, are the main reasons causing difficulties in work with special needs children:

- insufficient psychology, pedagogical and medical knowledge of children with intellectual disorders, sensory impairment, locomotor patients, children with deviant (abnormal) behavior;
- fear, inability to work with disabled children (low psychological readiness for activity with "special needs" children);
- lack of experience to work with families of disabled children;
- poor awareness of methods and techniques aimed to work with special needs children;
- unavailability of practice to organize coeducation of disabled children and children without development disorders in the educational process of the whole group
- low level of inclusive culture in society.

The results of school teachers' questioning were the following: 10% of teachers consider themselves ready to work in the context of inclusive education, but on condition that there is 1 or 2 school children with mild development disorders. 30% of school teachers refuse to co-educate children with special needs and children without deviations in their development. Though most school teachers (60%) consider that inclusive education is a compulsory measure of public policy, they are ready to continue their professional activity even if there is a disabled child in their class. School teachers connect difficulties in work with:

- poor knowledge concerning the features of children with development disorders and their training;
- the organization of educational process and stay of pupils with special needs in class;
- pupils' interrelationship and general atmosphere in class;
- insufficient psychological availability to work with such children;
- own attitude towards disabled children (pity, contempt);
- the increasing work with pupils' parents.

The questioning of higher school teachers showed that 30% of teachers consider themselves ready to work in the context of inclusive education if students have mild development disorders and safe intelligence. 20% of teachers answered that they are not ready to carry out educational activity in a group where there are disabled students. 50% of teachers could train people with special needs, but do not know the way to do this. They explain it by the fact that they have not enough knowledge of

certain diseases and development disorders, and insufficient elaboration of programs to work with them. Higher school teachers stated some requirements necessary for work with students with special educational needs:

- organization of advanced training courses for teachers to get acquainted with the specificity of work in the context of inclusion;
- creation of necessary conditions, including the application of assisting (supporting) technologies in the course of training students with special needs and various nozologies;
- active participation of tutors in the educational process.

Thus, effective development of inclusive practice in the modern world dictates the necessity to train and retrain teaching staff as one of the conditions of its successful implementation.

Training program of inclusive teachers

In this regard, we have developed the program of advanced training courses for preschool, school and higher school teachers: "Features of disabled people and persons with special needs training in the context of inclusive education"; it makes 180 academic hours (5 credits); the program may be delivered within 26 days.

The objective of the program is to change the quality of teachers' professional competences necessary for work in the context of inclusive education.

As a result of the program mastering, the learner has to acquire the following knowledge and abilities necessary for quality change of competences:

The learner has to know:

- the essence of inclusive education.
- psychophysiological features of disabled people and persons with special needs
- modern material and technical resources to support the inclusive process.
- requirements to educational methodological support of the inclusive education.

The learner has to be able:

- to carry out psychology and pedagogical support of persons with special needs.
- to carry out correctional and pedagogical activity in the context of inclusive education;
- to carry out productive interaction with the participants of the pedagogical process;

Having generalized the questioning results, we have brought out the following sections in the program of advanced training courses for pedagogical employees of inclusive education:

- theoretical training;
- psychological training;
- practical training;
- cultural and educational training;
- project maintenance.

Types of activities: lectures, master classes, seminar and practical training, methodical consultations.

The first stage of training according to this program makes 56 hours (8 days); it consists of lectures and seminars and includes theoretical foundations of teaching people with special needs in 8 subjects:

- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with eyesight disorder in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with hearing disorder in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with mental development disorders in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with severe speech disorders in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/school children and students with locomotor disorders in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with deviant (abnormal) behavior (early children's autism, syndrome of attention deficiency with hyperactivity, etc.) in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with somatic diseases (oncology, asthma, etc.) in the context of inclusive education;
- training and education of preschool/ school children and students with racial, ethnic and language peculiarities in the context of inclusive education.

Besides, the theoretical part of the program assumes the consideration of such issues as:

- the concept, essence, history of inclusive education;
- psychology, pedagogical and social support of persons with special needs in the inclusive space;
- material-technical support of inclusive education;
- educational-methodological support of educational programs implementation;

The theoretical part is delivered in three subgroups by different lecturers in accordance to the professional activity: preschool, school and higher education.

After theoretical training there is a test; it checks the knowledge acquired by learners at the first stage. To pass to the second stage of the program - psychological training—it is necessary to gain appropriate number of credits for this work. If testing results are unsatisfactory, participants have an opportunity to retest.

Inclusive education assumes the necessity to create the so-called psychological availability, i.e. creation of general positive attitude, friendly atmosphere for persons with special needs. All participants of inclusive space have to be involved in this process. Positive attitude towards persons with special needs is, obviously, the major prerequisite for teacher's work in the inclusive environment.

Therefore the second section of this program is psychological training of teachers for work in the context of inclusive education. The goal of this stage is to form steady motivation for work with persons with special health needs, a positive emotional attitude, psychological readiness, elimination of psychological barriers, fears, anxiety.

The time of teachers' psychological training makes 28 hours (4 days). This work includes the complex of trainings. Their objective is to form positive settings, tolerant attitude towards persons with special needs.

Applied techniques are: modeling of situations, personal contact with special needs people, relaxation exercises, autogenic trainings, trainings. Classes are conducted by experienced psychologists with the participation of invited persons having special educational needs.

The third section of the program is teachers' practical training, it makes 56 academic hours (8 days). This block suggests attendance of lessons of those colleagues who work with special needs persons both in the context of special and inclusive education. Acquaintance with the equipment, methodical materials necessary for successful work in the context of inclusive education is supposed. The main methods of work at this stage are conversation, observation, analysis of lessons.

Cultural and educational training assumes inclusive culture development of all participants of the educational process. The fourth stage of the program lasts 28 academic hours (4 days). At this stage, teachers are taught etiquette, culture of professional communication, culture of behavior, speech culture to interact effectively with disabled school children, children without special educational needs, parents, colleague to transfer and distribute this knowledge among the public. The main forms of work are lectures, seminars, modeling of situations, arrangement of stands.

The last stage of advanced training courses is projects maintenance. It takes 12 academic hours (2 days). Projects maintenance includes the elaboration of an adapted training program, additional to the main one, for persons with special needs in a certain subject, and a public presentation.

Thus, this program of advanced training courses includes the main aspects of inclusive teachers' vocational training as it is worked out according to their professional demands, requirements and requests, and results of questioning as well.

Discussions

Many scientists (Symes & Humphrey, 2011; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014; Akhmetzyanova, 2014; Alekhina, 2013; Armstrong 2003) have studied the issues of teachers' training. There have been conducted researches of teachers' motivation for vocational education (Athanasiadis, 2010); teachers' attitude to inclusive education (Mengual-Andrés et al, 2015; Sharma, Shaukat & Furlonger, 2015; Alquraini, 2012; Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Nimante & Tubele 2010); psychological readiness of future teachers to work with special needs children (Sukhoterina, 2013). The experience of training teachers for inclusive education is presented in works of P.A. Bartolo (2010).

All this testifies to the relevance of the conducted research and its practical importance for training children, teenagers, young people with special needs in the context of inclusive education.

Conclusion

At present, the realization of inclusive education is the priority guideline of social and educational policy in the majority of developed and developing states (Loreman, 2010; Malofeyev, 1996).

According to the opinion of most foreign experts, the success of inclusion in many respects depends on the competent use of pedagogical and

psychological resources. They include professional competence of inclusive teachers; reorganization of the system of training and professional support of teaching staff; attitude of teachers and children with standard development to the phenomenon of disability, and its influence on the efficiency of inclusive education (Rieser, 2013; Pijl, 2010).

The transition to inclusive education is a long process demanding special attention to all participants of the educational process: children with special needs, learners without development disorders, parents and teaching staff of the educational institution.

It should be noted that teachers of an inclusive education institution have tasks the realization of which requires additional knowledge and abilities to work with special needs persons.

In this regard the organization of teachers' retraining and conducting relevant advanced training courses aimed to extend the available knowledge and techniques of work with disabled people and persons with special needs of school teachers, tutors of preschool educational institutions, and lecturers of higher education institutions that begin and continue their professional activity in the context of inclusive education is relevant.

Recommendations

The content of the article have practical value for teachers working with children with disabilities, for teachers of extension courses.

Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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