

On the question of inclusive education: the Russian context

Sobre la cuestión de la educación inclusiva: el contexto de la Federación Rusa

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Abstract

The article examines the theoretical aspects of inclusive education, the process of its implementation in the world community. The current state of inclusive education in Russia and its legal consolidation is analyzed, the emphasis is on the education of persons with disabilities in the schools. Practical implementation of the provisions of the legislation at the federal and regional levels is being studied. The prospects for the development of inclusive education in Russia are assessed.

key words: inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive education in Russia, correctional schools

Resumen

El artículo examina los aspectos teóricos de la educación inclusiva, el proceso de su implementación en la comunidad mundial. Se analiza el estado actual de la educación inclusiva en Rusia y su consolidación legal, se hace hincapié en la educación de las personas con discapacidad en las escuelas. Se estudia la aplicación práctica de las disposiciones de la legislación a nivel federal y regional. Se evalúan las perspectivas para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva en Rusia.

Palabras clave: inclusión, educación inclusiva, educación inclusiva en Rusia, escuelas correccionales

1. Introduction

For a long time, educational and social isolation was widespread in both developed and developing countries. One of the strongest trends in the economy is growing inequality, spatial segmentation and fragmentation of the culture of the population. Social exclusion goes beyond poverty because it is associated with an increase in the number of people who do not participate in society and do not have access to basic goods and social security networks. This situation leads to the fact that these people are “excluded from society” and live below the level of dignity and equality, which we all have the right to have.

Social integration is necessarily, though not exclusively, linked to more inclusive educational practices, that is, the development of schools or learning environments that meet the needs of all people in the community and

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respond to the diversity of learning needs, regardless of social origin, culture or individual characteristics. An inclusive school has no selection or discrimination mechanisms. Instead, education becomes a way to integrate students with different opportunities, thereby contributing to social cohesion, which is one of the main goals of education. However, it is important to be sure that education really should contribute to the development of a more inclusive society, and not vice versa.

2. Methodology

The authors of this article present unique research results. For the accumulated database of sources, a study was conducted.

The research methods that were used: the method of analyzing documents used to obtain information through qualitative analysis, studying concepts, programs, documents, the current legislation of the Russian Federation in the field of inclusive education, and scientific publications. The analysis method is important to identify the features of the implementation of inclusive education in Russia. The logical analytical method was used to analyze information collected on the basis of the formation of intermediate and final conclusions.

This article may be useful for scientists conducting research in the field of the effectiveness of educational and scientific institutions, quality education, the post-Soviet development of Russia, the development of education in modern Russia, as well as practice in the field of science and education.

3. Theoretical background

The definition of inclusion has different interpretations in different countries and the time and reasons for its introduction, as well as the difference from the term “integration”, will be discussed below.

The key element of inclusion is not individualization, but the diversification of the educational situation and the personalization of the general learning experience to achieve the highest degree of participation of all students, considering their individual needs. This implies promotion to a universal system, where the educational process and curriculum from the very beginning take into account the diversity of the needs of all students, rather than planning on the basis of an “average” student, and then performing actions that will help fulfill the individual needs of specific students or their groups that were not taken into account by the proposal for education based on the logic of homogeneity, but not diversity.

Consideration of diversity is a necessary condition for achieving quality education, which is probably one of the main problems that schools and teachers are currently facing, because its solution implies significant changes in existing concepts, approaches, curriculum, teaching practice, teacher training, assessment systems and educational organizations in general.

Inclusion is characterized by the following aspects (García Huidobro J. E. ,2005):

- it implies a different vision of education based on diversity, rather than homogeneity, according to the concept of inclusive education, the differences are inherent in human nature, every child is one and only and it should be the basis for enriching the learning process, which means, that they should be part of education for all, not subjects of differentiated programs;
- it is necessary to move to educational programs that take into account the diversity of needs and abilities, so that education can be appropriate for all people, not only for certain groups of society, in order to achieve relevance, it is necessary to create a curriculum and ensure the educational process so, that they can be adapted to the needs and characteristics of all students and the different circumstances in which they develop and learn;

-the curriculum should provide equal opportunities for all, but at the same time, provide sufficient freedom for schools to determine the content of education necessary to increase its effectiveness in terms of the local context and the educational needs of students, relevance also implies the development of an intercultural curriculum that promotes respect for different ethnic groups;

- it is designed to identify and minimize obstacles faced by students during their stay in an educational institution and training, actions should be mainly aimed at eliminating physical, personal and institutional barriers that limit learning opportunities, as well as ensuring full access and participation in all educational activities for all students;

- it can be said, that the process of inclusion is endless, as it implies profound changes in educational systems and school culture, educational institutions must constantly review their values, organizations and teaching methods in order to identify and minimize the obstacles faced by students;

- inclusion also implies the development of support systems, which are needed to help educators and teachers in the integration process, as well as students so that they can optimize their development and improve their learning, this support includes all the resources that complement or enhance teaching activities: additional teachers, tutors, assistants, specialized workers, as well as specialists from other fields.

Inclusive education is based on ethical, social, educational and economic principles. Inclusion has means to realize the right to high-quality education without discrimination and inequality.

Education is a public good, because it contributes to the development of people and society. The right to education in the broadest sense goes beyond access to free and compulsory education. In order to fully enjoy this right, it is necessary to ensure a quality education that contributes to the highest development of the multiple abilities of each person, that is, the right to education is the right to continuous learning. Understanding education as a right implies that the state is obliged to respect, guarantee, protect and promote it. The violation of this right also affects the enjoyment of other human rights.

The right to quality education should be fairly ensured, protecting in a special way the rights of minorities and groups with the least power in society. Non-discrimination in education entails ensuring that all people and groups can have access to all levels of education and receive it at similar quality standards, excluding separate education systems and institutions designed for specific individuals or groups.

The transition to more inclusive education systems requires a strong political will to develop long-term policies involving various sectors of government and civil society. It also requires the definition of a legal framework that would establish rights and obligations, and also provide the necessary resources to strengthen the existing systems for ensuring the right to education.

Inclusion can act as a means of improving the quality of education and raising the qualifications of teachers. Ensuring that all students can learn to reach a certain level and use best practices for this requires adapting pedagogical practices and pedagogical support to the needs and characteristics of each student. Inclusive education includes higher professional competence for teachers, cooperation between teachers, families and students, as well as more comprehensive and accessible educational projects that facilitate the participation and learning of all. It also requires the development of an appropriate curriculum that needs to be balanced in terms of the type of study, different learning situations and activities, a wide range of learning strategies and a school environment in which everyone learns and is assessed as equal, especially supporting those who need it most. Simply, the aim of inclusion is to move towards education for everyone, with everyone and for everyone.

Considering diversity and integration in the classroom is a complex task, which includes increasing the motivations and competencies of teachers, transforming teacher training and creating good working conditions.

Teachers must take risks and be open to change, look for new ways to learn and critically evaluate their practice in order to transform it, value differences among students as an element of professional enrichment and be able to work together with other teachers, professionals and families. Teachers should know their students well, be attentive to their needs and emotions, offer many opportunities and have high hopes for teaching all students.

It is worth noting, that inclusive schools can ultimately contribute to optimizing economic resources. A school where all students study together is cheaper than a complex system of schools of different specialties specializing in different groups of students. A study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1994 showed that the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular schools can be seven to nine times cheaper than their education in special schools. In addition, various studies have shown that an approach based on inclusive education is not only less expensive, but also more effective because it improves school performance and the results obtained by all children (García Huidobro J. E., 2005).

The issue of inclusive education first began to rise at the United Nations site after World War II, the time at which the strong influence of the idea of humanism fell. Until this period, only special institutions of a closed type, we mean boarding schools, were created for children with disabilities. For example, in the 18th century, educational institutions were created for the deaf-mute and blind, similar institutions for children with mental health problems were even less. Such educational institutions were opened by well-known teachers, who develop their own methods for teaching people with special needs, the state did not participate in the education and activities of such schools. Thus, we can talk about the existence of inequality in society and even the segregation of people with disabilities.

In the mid-twentieth century, the tendencies of humanism mentioned above and the elimination of social inequality contributed to the creation of public organizations in European states and the United States whose goal was to integrate people with disabilities into the modern social environment and eliminate discrimination in any form. The legal basis was not only national normative legal acts, but also international ones: The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. However, in practice, the integration process has proven to be very difficult. The lack of sufficient legal, financial and organizational training, as well as inadequate training of teaching staff led to the fact, that in many “integration schools” children felt worse than within specialized ones (Myakinina S. B., 2015). It was decided to develop a new approach to the education of children with disabilities and, in fact, a new approach was reduced to the introduction of a new term, and not to organizational changes. In 1994, the World Conference on Education for Persons with Special Needs in the Spanish city of Salamanca adopted a declaration on the principles, policies and practical actions in the field of education for persons with special needs, which included the term “inclusion” to replace “integration” (Salamanca Declaration on Principles, 1994).

We should highlight the difference between these two concepts. By integration is understood the process of development as a result of which unity and integrity within the system is achieved, it is based on the interdependence of individual specialized elements. Inclusion is the addition, inclusion or joining. That is, it can be concluded that terminologically integration is much broader term than inclusions, moreover, as mentioned by R.P. Dimenshteyn and I.V. Larikova, integration is a symmetric and bilateral process, and inclusion is asymmetric and one-sided (Dimenshteyn R.P., Larikova I.V., 2009). Integration involves a process in which a number of educational environments are consistently built, which allow each child to gradually increase the educational potential and each of these stages should prepare the child to move on to the next. It should be noted, that this approach was successfully implemented on the basis of the Center for Medical Pedagogy.

As already noted, inclusion is a narrower term and involves the inclusion of someone in an alien environment for him with the aim of making him a part of this environment. It is necessary to agree with the statement of R.P. Dimenshteyn and I.V. Larikova, that a simple change of terminology without taking into account experience and

mistakes cannot lead to the creation of an effective educational environment, children with disabilities should also become a part of it.

4. The Russian context

The integration process (and further inclusion), as well as in the Western states, did not go smoothly in Russia and faced bureaucratic problems. Officials from the sphere of Education said, that this process is impossible in Russia because society and the system are not ready for this, but in fact the initiative came directly from society and many parents were for inclusive education and as a result, the resistance was broken. However, it all started with the destruction of the structure of the specialized schools, without preparing a different infrastructure and teachers, which could not cause disapproval from the pathologists. Developed inclusive education in Russia in general and in the legal context in particular begins with the state program "Accessible Environment» (Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation, 2015). The current state of the legal regulation of inclusive education in Russia will be analyzed below.

First of all, we should refer to the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation", the main article in this case will be 79, devoted to issues of education for persons with disabilities. Thus, according to clause 2 of Article 79, education for persons with disabilities is possible within the framework of general educational organizations providing training in adaptive educational programs, and in such organizations the appropriate conditions to receive education should be created (Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation», 2012).

According to paragraph 3 of this article, special learning conditions are the use of special educational programs and methods of training and education, special textbooks, teaching aids and didactic materials, special technical means of training for collective and individual use, the provision of assistant services (assistant), providing students with the necessary technical assistance, conducting group and individual remedial classes, providing access in the buildings of organizations involved in educational activities and other conditions that will increase the effect of education for person with disabilities (Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation», 2012).

Particular attention should be paid to paragraph 4 of Article 79, because it includes legal provisions for people with disabilities to receive education with other students of an educational organization (that is, within an inclusive education), as well as within certain groups or organizations (Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation», 2012). Thus, getting an education within the framework of inclusion is completely voluntary and is based on the decision of the parents. Moreover, the introduction of inclusive education should not lead to the elimination of the correlation specialized schools, however, in practice the situation turned out to be the opposite.

As noted by S.B. Myakinana, on the basis of the Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science "On Remedial and Inclusive Education of Children" in 2013, in Russia there is a reduction in correctional educational institutions (Myakinina S. B., 2015) (Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, 2013). This trend required a reaction and the attention of the executive authorities of the subject was drawn to the point about inclusive education for the sake of inclusive education and it should not become purely formal, which means, first of all, that it is necessary not to liquidate correctional institutions, which inevitably leads to parents lead children with disabilities to a regular school only because they have no other options, and improving the mechanisms of inclusive education in the region, which will make such education attractive for parents. This approach is supported by the letter of the Ministry of Education and Science "On preserving the system of specialized remedial education" in 2014 (Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2014).

From September 1, 2016, the Federal State Educational Standard of Primary General Education for Students with Disabilities, the so-called inclusive education, approved by order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of December 19, 2014, began to operate (Bondarenko I., 2018).

According to the provisions of the Standard, the created programs can be implemented both together with other students and within individual classes and institutions; there are several program options suitable for specific cases. The program type is determined on the basis of recommendations of the psychological, medical and pedagogical commission. It is worth noting, that today the report of the psychological, medical and pedagogical commission is only advisory in nature and may not even be provided by parents to an educational institution, however, in such case, they could not require the fulfilment of the program options provided for by the above Standard and a child with a disability will be able to study in accordance with a general standard. The option formulated in the decision of the psychological, medical and pedagogical commission is not the only possible one and parents can initiate a transition from one training option to another. Nowadays, programs have been developed only for primary education (grades 1–4), which are introduced in stages from 2016 to 2020, and are expected to be developed for the next levels of education.

The quantity of children with disabilities in the classroom is determined using SanPiN 2.4.2.3286-15 for students with disabilities. In the inclusive class, the number of children in which there are 25 children with disabilities cannot exceed two, if there are more, then the fullness of the class should be reduced (Resolution of the Chief State Sanitary Doctor of the Russian Federation, 2015).

The state provides financial support by allocating subsidies to subjects to support educational organizations in the transition period, to provide them with the necessary equipment and personnel.

In addition to the legal aspect, the formation of a positive attitude towards inclusive education in society is also important; it requires a large amount of educational work. It is obvious, that the introduction of innovative steps is always a laborious and risky process, which takes more than one year, and maybe more than a dozen years. In this aspect, foreign experience is interesting, for example, in Sweden there was a huge educational work devoted to the integration process among teachers, parents and the population as a whole. It took about 20 years to carry out such work and obtain a positive result in Sweden, and only after that the inclusive education received legislative consolidation (Vinbald O., 2018).

France has also seriously approached this issue and fixes the creation in schools of conditions for the adaptation of children with disabilities (for example, the purchase of equipment and the payment to specialists, who are necessary for escort). In addition, within the framework of universities, training of teachers for work in the field of inclusive education (Volskaya O.V., Flotskaya N.Yu., , 2014).

Denmark implements a “differentiated approach” in inclusive education. Parents have the right to send a child to an educational institution at their place of residence and the educational organization creates conditions for teaching children with disabilities. There are specialists in municipalities, who can be sent to a specific school to help a child, while both individuals with disabilities and groups of individuals can also be trained (Dimenshteyn R.P., Larikova I.V., 2009).

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be said, that inclusive education has many positive aspects, it allows children with disabilities to get a quality education and better integrate into the social environment, which will certainly make their adult life easier, as well as improve level of tolerance in society, making it more open and tolerant. But, as noted above, just regulatory consolidation is not enough for inclusive education to be perceived by society and become effective. As Olga Va-Sileva rightly noted, “At present, every fifth school in Russia is officially considered

inclusive. In reality, this figure is much less. In order to become inclusive, it is not enough at the entrance to make a ramp for child with disabilities in it." (Bondarenko I., 2018) such process is complex and requires a large amount of resources, including a high level of responsibility of teachers and parents who choose this type of education, regardless of whether they are parents of a child with a disability or not. Therefore, the development of an inclusive education in Russia at a qualitative level will be possible only under the conditions of further elaboration of adapted educational programs, timely correction of already existing ones, improvement of qualification of teaching staff and a corresponding improvement in working conditions for them, availability of the necessary material and resource base and conducting informational educational work with the population; moreover, the achievements of the Russian system of correctional institutions should not be leveled.

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