

## **Readiness of the Subjects of Education Process to the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Primary School**

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**Abstract:** The study is devoted to an urgent subject-identifying the problem field of readiness of the subjects of education process in the Altai Krai to the implementation of inclusive education. According to the carried out research it is possible to state that the attitude, readiness and provision of inclusive education are treated by respondents as developing and the ones that need the pedagogical community as well as the society in whole to be involved. The article contains the results of the survey among the subjects of education process (primary school teachers, heads of educational institutions, parents of the children with special health capabilities and developing in a normal way).

**Key words:** Inclusive education, subjects of education process, pupils with special health capabilities, readiness, Russia

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The implementation of the Federal State Education Standard of Primary Education for Pupils with Limited Health Capabilities (FSED PGE) begins in Russian schools in September 2016, in this connection, the significance of inclusive education is actualized and the implementation of the latter is possible under the condition that all the participants of education process are ready (Anonymous, 2014).

Inclusive education, in the broad sense of the word, is the ability of the group or community to take responsibility and facilitate the solution of a problem resulting from initial characteristics of a pupil. Inclusive education presupposes not only mechanical introduction of children with Special Health Capabilities (SHC) into comprehensive school but the readiness of all the subjects of education process (children, parents, teachers, heads of educational institutions) to ensure inclusion of children with SHC in school educational environment, where they will not only study but also be able to socialize: make friends, be in demand for the society irrespective of their abilities and achievements. It is primary school that is the first step of introducing children with SHC to school life: their success in educational sphere and life in the society depends on how their teachers, parents and peers will build interaction with them.

At present, participants of education process are at different, sometimes contradictory, levels of readiness to implement coeducation of children with SHC and children

without developmental disorders in comprehensive school. A contradiction arises: state education policy indicates an important and significant step for the society to the acknowledgement of potential of each member to realize their needs irrespective of capabilities, whereas teachers and parents are not ready to solve the problem. Implementation of the standard in reality by direct participants can turn to be a formality, a kind of stumbling block in the becoming and development of children, both with and without special health capabilities.

The aim of the article is to determine the problem field of readiness of subjects of education process for implementing the Federal State Education Standard of Primary Education for Pupils with Limited Health Capabilities.

**Literature review:** Readiness of the subjects to implement inclusive education is usually considered in terms of the teacher's training. Thus, it is mentioned in foreign research (J.-R. Kim., R.V. Chopra, N.K. French) that a teacher who has "many-purpose" education (special (defectologic) and pedagogical education in the area "Teacher Education") is considered to be the most in-demand (Kim, 2011).

It is such a combination of the content of the acquired education that enables a teacher to form the main components of readiness (motivational-value, operational-activity, reflexive-evaluative). At the same time, there is an increase in relevance of the value system, motivational-personal readiness of teachers implementing inclusive education. It is stated by both foreign and Russian researchers (Hitrjuk, 2013; Jakovleva, 2011).

However, formation of a value attitude to inclusive education is not only teachers' task but united actions of the heads of educational institutions, psychologists, parents, children on its construction and implementation in practice interaction with children. To form a value attitude to inclusive education among the subjects of education process it is important not only to develop a positive emphatic attitude to the former and general knowledge but also to organize a joint pedagogical (teaching and educational) activity. Thus, axiological approach becomes a foundation for inclusive education where universality and fundamentality of humanistic value, unity of objectives and means, priority to the ideas of freedom find their expression, as the most important value is recognition of each person's right for respect and acceptance of their individual characteristics.

In this case, the value attitude to inclusive education is manifested in the following: the subjects of education process accept objective goals for managing their own partaking in the activity; they understand the idea of the activity they perform; they participate actively; the subjects of educational activities acquire means of implementing inclusive education.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The main research method was a survey, to carry out the latter 3 variants of questionnaires for different groups of respondents were developed (for primary school teachers, parents, heads of educational institutions). The objective of the questionnaire was to find out the problems in organizing and implementing coeducation of children with SHC and with normal development. The questions were distributed into the following groups: the attitude of subjects of education process to coeducation of children with SHC and with normal development; readiness to implement inclusive education; provision the education process with special means, programmes and teaching aids. 150 people took part in the survey: primary school teachers (50), parents (50), heads of educational institutions (50) of the Altai Krai (The research was conducted under a grant of the rector of Altai State Pedagogical University (project No. 02-2016)).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The characteristic of the teachers' answers should be dwelt upon. The survey was carried out among teachers, aged from 31-50 years old, who had first or higher qualification grade, 16-year work experience or more that proves their high level of professional competence and indicates their readiness for self-actualization, self-improvement and self-education.

The analysis of the teachers' answers showed that the overwhelming majority see more problems than advantages of inclusive education. At the same time 93% of teachers note that there are such children in their class: children with musculoskeletal disorders (36%), visual disorders (36%) and other diseases (71%). It should be mentioned that none of the teachers specified the disease in the section "Other" which to our mind is quite alarming as the teacher does not completely realize and show interest to such children's needs, as a result there may be difficulties with constructing cooperation both in communication and organization of teaching process.

The next group of questions was devoted to teacher's readiness to work with SHC children. The standard suggests designing an individual programme of development as a way to organize SHC children involvement into joint actions. About 57% of teachers are ready to meet this requirement, 21% neither agree nor disagree, the rest of the teachers (22%) are not ready. It should be mentioned that readiness was typical of teachers who have an experience of working with SHC children. However, all teachers face difficulties in implementing individual programmes of development which are caused by finding new methods of work with children and this is time-consuming (57% of teachers noted this difficulty); 21% of teachers are unaware of methods of working with SHC children; the same number of teachers could not answer the question. At the same time only 36% of primary school teachers need help in their work with SHC children, 43% of teachers would like to get assistance only in some questions and 7% of teachers have no need in such help. However, in reality many teachers repeatedly asked for assistance in solving problems with teaching pupils with SHC (71%). This proves the fact that teachers need to perform their functions at a high professional level, they are interested in and responsible for high results of their professional activity. From this perspective, the answers to the question about teachers' readiness to work with SHC children seem to be reasonable: the majority of teachers think that in order to do this it is necessary to have special education (57%) or to attend refresher courses (36%), the rest of the teachers have not made the decision yet.

The opinion of the teachers who have seen the attitude of "normal" children to the children with SHC in practice is of high interest: half of the children (50%) have no intention to deal with them, only 36% treat them as equal and full members of school life; 7% ignore them; 7% treat them badly and call names. In this regard, many children with SHC, according to psychologists, have difficulties with studying that are caused by bad relations

with their peers (this was mentioned by 29% of teachers), communication with adults (21%), or the classroom atmosphere in general interferes into the studying process (29%). Some teachers (71%) believe that most of the difficulties with studying are caused by SHC children's peculiarities of managing their behaviour, emotions and their general health status (79%). In this connection, children with SHC have difficulties with some subjects to understand the material (93%), concentrate at the lesson (this was mentioned by the same number of teachers 93%) that causes difficulties with doing the homework; children have no time (this reason was suggested by 64% of teachers). In case children with SHC have a problem, in the first place they will ask their parents for help (79% of teachers think so) and then the teacher (64%). The last people to be asked for help are their peers. According to the teachers' opinion this is caused by difficulties in interrelations among children.

The answers to the question about considering personality traits of children with SHC in the teaching process were contradictory: 21% of teachers take them into consideration, 36% do it occasionally and that proves the general tendency of teachers' readiness to implement individual programmes of development. Other teachers replied negatively as they have no opportunity to take each pupil's interests into consideration. Moreover, 36% of teachers see no opportunity to have additional classes with children, 43% can occasionally offer assistance and only 21% of teachers will give such an opportunity to children.

The next category was comprised of questions about readiness of an educational institution to accept new children. Each school at the moment is poorly equipped: the most common equipment is used by "normal" children, such as computers and interactive whiteboards (that was mentioned by 36% of respondents); a convenient canteen, a spacious gym, a medical room (29%). The teachers mentioned that there are certain facilities for children with SHC at school: entrance ramps and elevators (29%), means for distance education (21%), though special equipment for visually and hearing impaired children is scarce. The teachers mentioned the following reasons that prevent coeducation of children at school:

- Shortage of necessary specialists (79%)
- A school is technically impractical and there is a shortage of specialists trained to organize education of children with SHC (59%)
- Lack of special programmes, tutors (57%)
- Negative attitude of healthy children and their parents (22%)

The opinion of parents who have healthy children and children with SHC plays an important role. The survey was conducted among 50 parents who mainly have healthy children (89%), the rest of parents have children with peculiarities in health which were not specified by the parents. The answers about possible coeducation of children at comprehensive school show that irrespective of a child's health status, most of the parents (70%) support this initiative. At first sight the given position does not prove teachers' concern about negative attitude to inclusive education: there are 11% of such parents, the same number of people are not interested in (indifferent to) the problem, the rest of the respondents are neither for nor against this idea. However, the following answer contradicts the opinion mentioned above: only 40% of parents support the idea of coeducation of children in the same class (these are mainly parents of children with SHC), other parents consider education in a specialized school (36%), distance education (6%), homeschooling (15%) to be more appropriate. There are a number of parents who have difficulties with making their decision about the question (10%). On the whole, this can be treated as a cautious attitude or a rejection of implementing inclusive education.

Such a state of things can be explained by the unawareness of the society of the essence of inclusive education. The problems connected with introducing inclusive education are being discussed mainly in the pedagogic environment. Mass media pay no attention to the issue and the society, first of all parents, are indifferent to the process. This is the reason of controversial opinions, indecision of respondents.

Such an attitude of parents to the problem of involving children with SHC into education process at a non-selective school is typical of countries where this initiative is realized within a comparatively short time frame. In Romania, for instance parents of children with disabilities are more approving of inclusive education; half of the parents of healthy children are against their youngsters being taught in the same class with disabled children; this situation can be also explained by general unawareness of the society about the essence and environment of inclusive education (Gliga and Popa, 2010).

Meanwhile, according to the experience of development inclusive education in Europe, it is a long and, above all, social process. Thus, Italy which was one of the first countries to pass the law about the right of children with special needs for education in non-selective schools, launched a massive public education campaign via all the mass media and public meetings to provide successful education to "special" children (Sergeeva, 2011).

To carry out the survey in the next group of respondents we invited heads (directors of studies at primary schools, headmasters, representatives of district, city and krai administrations) who partook in preparing comprehensive schools of the Altai Krai for implementing Federal State Learning Standard (FSLs) for pupils with SHC. It was found out that they participated in drafting statutory and regulatory information (75%), conducting seminars (50%), collecting statistic data (38%), working out guidelines (25%), conducting seminars (13%) and carrying out research (6%). As it is seen from the data, the majority of respondents were involved into various kinds of work, therefore they are familiar with the necessary documentation and are well informed. That is why when answering the question about the aspects of organizing inclusive education in primary school which need additional regulatory documents to be developed, they mentioned documents regulating financial and personnel issues (65%) which are the concern of the heads of educational institutions.

Answering the question about probable risks when introducing the new standard, the heads of educational institutions indicated children's negative attitude, the impossibility of creating conditions for individual education paths for children with SHC, shortage of specialists. The respondents were almost unanimous in this respect (73%). Anyway, all of them note a possible decrease in academic progress, increase of expenses, unreadiness of the society to inclusive education (65%). Some guidelines can be considered quite reasonable: specialist shortage (all the participants of education process speak about that) and increase of expenses (which is quite natural during the transformation period). When answering the question about the readiness of schools to inclusive education parents demonstrated the same tendency, they pointed out that teachers' qualification is insufficient at present (70%), there is a lack of necessary specialists and the schools that have not been included into the programme "Available Environment" are ill-equipped. It is difficult to share the idea about the absence of special programmes (which was mentioned by 50% of respondents) as all of them are published on a specialized website (Fgosreests.ru) for pupils with SHC depending on nosology with consideration for the intensity of an illness, character of manifestation, etc. The respondents also mentioned (22 and 38% respectively) negative attitude of healthy children and their parents; moral and psychological unreadiness of the society to inclusive education.

At the same time all the survey participants pointed out prospects of implementing inclusive education: holding joint events aimed at socializing both children with SHC and other participants of education process

(social projects, media coverage of issues concerning implementation of inclusive education, involvement of the society into the process).

## CONCLUSION

The results of the survey indicate that all the participants of education process have problems with implementation of inclusive education in practice. All of these problems are rooted not only in training and retraining teachers, creating a legal framework, material security; and in case there is no value attitude to inclusive education in society its popularization, accepting and creating conditions for its implementation.

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