

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN INSTITUTIONS OF GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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Abstract

Along with employment of people with disabilities, great attention should be paid to their education, which affects their employability and full integration into social life. Inclusive education is one of the strategic directions in the development of the education systems of states. According to the laws of inclusive education, institutions of General secondary education should become accessible to all categories of children and create the necessary conditions to meet the educational needs and self-realization of the individual. The article deals with the problems and prospects of inclusive education in general secondary education institutions in the Republic of Belarus, as well as with the issues of creating an inclusive educational environment as an important component of inclusive education. The groups of difficulties that need to be overcome in order to create an accessible education for students with psychophysical development are specified (architectural, urban infrastructure, regulatory, informational, financial, cognitive, socio-psychological, logistics, human resources, etc.). The prospects for the development of inclusive practices in general secondary education institutions are noted.

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1. Introduction

Currently, inclusive education is one of the strategic directions in the development of the education systems of states. The right to education is an essential socio-cultural human right, since, as a social institution, education plays an exceptional role in the formation and socialization of the individual (Lautkina, 2019).

The idea of expanding the educational space to include all students, regardless of differences in abilities and opportunities and their cultural, social, national and confessional status, is a priority in the development of the national education system (Lautkina, 2015). In that connection, it is becoming increasingly important to implement the Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education for Persons with Special Needs: ensuring the realization of the right of children with special needs to education and creating an adequate inclusive educational environment (Lautkina, 2019).

Inclusive education is seen as a legitimate process in the development of education, based on the recognition that all children, regardless of health differences, can learn together. In that regard, general secondary education institutions should become accessible in all respects and accept all children, regardless of their differences, and create the necessary conditions for cooperation, the satisfaction of educational needs and the purposeful development of each child, and the conditions for the self-realization of the individual (Concept for the development of inclusive education for persons with special developmental needs in Belarus, Order No. 608 of 22 July 2015).

2. Problem Statement

Every year in Belarus, about 3,000 children under 18 are recognized as persons with disabilities for the first time. The number of children with disabilities is increasing every year: in 2008 – 119837 people; in 2015 – 144459 people; in 2019 – 166186 people.

The education system is striving to create the necessary conditions to meet the educational needs of all students. Currently, 222 special classes, 5,787 integrated education classes and 1,368 correction and pedagogical assistance points operate in ordinary schools in Belarus. The number of students studying at home, in special schools or in boarding schools is decreasing. A barrier-free environment has been created in more than 10 schools (Minsk, Grodno, Brest and Novopolotsk).

International experience shows that any education system cannot fully cover and satisfy all individual learning needs.

Inclusive education requires institutions of general secondary education to create an enabling environment that allows students to reach their potential and realise themselves, promotes social integration and prepares them for their future employment (Kratochvilova & Havel, 2014).

Currently, inclusive educational practice in Belarus is limited, largely experimental and unstable. First, this is due to the fact that the inclusive education system is in the formation stage. More than half of the children with disabilities are still enrolled in special boarding schools (3–4 per cent of children in European countries are in such schools). Secondly, it's the transition from integrated education to inclusive education. This is due to the fact that the integrated educational environment does not always

take into account the needs of each learner, and the ideological foundations of inclusive education include the exclusion of any discrimination against children (Grebennikova, 2015).

The transition to inclusive education is a process of changing social consciousness and education systems to remove sociocultural, psychological, educational barriers and the equal and open participation of all children in all activities (Radygina, 2018).

At the same time, the transition to inclusive education in institutions of general secondary education should be preceded by the creation of an enabling environment that covers not only architectural and natural landscape resources, but also by the adaption of the educational process: legal framework, curricula, organization, teaching methods and styles, textbooks and materials, logistics. Without a systemic approach, the transition to inclusive education cannot be successful.

The analysis of the scientific and methodological literature has shown that different sources consider only part of the conditions for the transition to inclusive education, rather than a complete system of conditions. This leads to problems in the practical implementation of the transition to inclusive education (Kratochvilova & Havel, 2014).

In this regard, we have examined the groups of obstacles that need to be overcome in order to create accessible and comfortable education for children with disabilities.

3. Research Questions

In recent years, a number of prerequisites have been established in the country's education system that make it possible to accelerate, predict the effectiveness and efficiency of the development and implementations of inclusive education in institutions of general secondary education: first, it is the process of socialization and inclusion of children with disabilities in the educational environment, and second, it is the creation of a barrier-free environment in a number of general secondary education institutions. However, only 1.5 per cent of general secondary education establishments in Belarus have a barrier-free environment; in others only an adaptive educational environment is created (Zmushko, 2016).

Therefore, in our work we have considered the existing problems and prospects for the development of inclusive practices in general secondary education institutions.

Groups of obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education

An analysis of scientific literature has shown that a number of researchers (Isosomppi & Leivo, 2015; Perez, 2014) identify several groups of obstacles that need to be overcome in order to create accessible and comfortable education for students with disabilities: architectural, urban infrastructure, regulatory, informational, financial, cognitive, socio-psychological, logistics, human resources, etc.

Architectural barriers and city infrastructure development. The transition to inclusive education covers not only the education system, but all spheres of human activity. Inability of the city infrastructure to meet the needs of people with disabilities is the most significant problem. Institutions of general secondary education implementing inclusive practices need to create special architectural environments (ramps, elevators, roads, etc.). In state secondary school No. 8. Novopolotsk is being improved the barrier-free environment from year to year. Today there are ramps, a lifting device "Climber", repair kits for school furniture, made taking into account the motor abilities of children with disorders of the musculoskeletal system. The floor covering on two floors of the school, in a special

sanitary room and a reorganized local computer network was replaced. In spring 2018, an elevator was put into operation.

However, more often the problem is not the availability of facilities and barrier-free establishment of general secondary education, but the inability of a student with disabilities to get from home to the place of study, due to the presence of barriers in residential buildings, public transport, high curbs on the sidewalks, etc., which is the main problem. Due to such unfavourable conditions, the majority of children with disabilities have to be isolated.

Regulatory and financial barriers. In the presence and development of a legal and regulatory framework for the implementation of the ideas of inclusive education in Belarus, there are a number of financial difficulties associated with the identification of sources and amounts of funding. As Isosomppi and Leivo (2015) note, there is an imbalance between the policy of implementation of inclusive practices and the resources aimed at their implementation, as well as the economic problems of individual agencies.

Cognitive barriers. Some students with disabilities experience difficulties in mastering the content of educational material in full and at the same pace as students without deviations. Overcoming cognitive barriers is primarily associated with the system of complex medical, psychological and pedagogical support, as well as the availability and development of individual educational technologies, approaches, and programs adapted to the special educational needs of students with disabilities.

Information barriers are primarily related to the limited and inaccessible information on the capacities of certain institutions of general secondary education. Modern information technologies provide unlimited opportunities to find information to facilitate the choice of a place of study. The website of institutions of general secondary education in Belarus that implement inclusive practices contains information on the availability of teaching support for special technical and software learning tools, distance education technologies, barrier-free architectural environment, etc.

Barriers related to material and technical support. The material supply of schools and the creation of a barrier-free environment are the main problems of general secondary education institutions. The modern educational process involves the use and introduction of various technical and information means of education, which for a student with disabilities can act both as a barrier and a resource. Modern computer and information technologies make it possible to provide information in a form accessible to students with disabilities, such as electronic magnifying glasses and voice programmes for the visually impaired.

According to the results of Gonzalez Perez's research (2014), educational technologies are a tool for creating a flexible and versatile learning environment, and make the learning process accessible to wider groups of students.

Social and psychological barriers are related to the formation of tolerance, a friendly atmosphere, friendliness, i.e., psychological accessibility among the people surrounding the students with OPFR.

One of the main barriers in the practice of inclusive education is the attitude of teachers and their attitude towards inclusion of students with disabilities (Perez, 2014). This is due to teachers' experience and willingness to work in mixed classes, expectations of students with disabilities, degree and peculiarities of diseases.

The second important barrier is peer attitude. It is necessary that students with disabilities are not psychologically isolated when they are in the same class as their peers.

Lack of human resources. The issue of staff training and retraining is a major challenge in the practical implementation of the transition to inclusive education. Practice shows that most teachers in institutions of general secondary education do not possess special psychological and pedagogical knowledge, without which it is impossible to fully take into account the educational opportunities and limitations of students with disabilities. Difficulties are related to teachers' fear of working with such children.

An important condition for the transition to inclusive education is the system of support for children with disabilities and the presence of so-called tutors in general secondary education institutions (Grebennikova, 2015).

Prospects for developing inclusive practices

In Belarus, many steps are being taken to develop inclusive education. The education system has a number of prerequisites that allow us to predict the success of this process. The first of such prerequisites is the fact that a child with disabilities is not an unusual phenomenon in general secondary education institutions. The majority of children with disabilities are still enrolled in educational institutions at their place of residence.

The barrier-free environment created in recent years in general secondary education institutions can also be seen as a prerequisite for the development of inclusive education. In order for the transition from integral education to inclusive education to be more effective, it is necessary to increase the number of educational institutions that meet the requirements to ensure unhindered access for persons with disabilities.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine inclusive practices in institutions of general secondary education, to identify and analyse objective and subjective factors that prevent the introduction and implementation of inclusive education.

5. Research Methods

The main methods of research were the analysis of domestic and foreign scientific and methodological literature and legal acts, synthesis and generalization of scientific ideas and obtained knowledge, pedagogical observation and description of the inclusive educational environment on the example of the state secondary school № 8 of the city of Novopolotsk, which from 2014 to 2018 took part in the implementation of the national pilot project "Testing the model of inclusive education in the educational institution", as well as the project "Implementation of the model for the formation of tolerance among the participants of the educational process through the organization of productive interaction with children with special developmental needs". In 2016, as part of the programme "Strengthened strategic cooperation with civil society and local authorities in Belarus", Novopolotsk

applied for the implementation of the European Union external assistance project "Novopolotsk – from an inclusive school to an inclusive city".

Our study was to compare the practices of selected general secondary education institutions with available theoretical knowledge in order to assess the readiness of these schools for inclusive education.

6. Findings

The creation of an accessible environment for students with disabilities will enable them to exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms, thus facilitating their full participation in the life of the country. The development of inclusive education in society is not just a sectoral educational objective implemented in the field of education. The process of functioning and improving the inclusive education system should be carried out as one of the priority areas of state social policy on the basis of strengthening intersectoral cooperation (medical, rehabilitation and psychological services, labour and educational institutions) and the interaction between society, schools, students and their parents.

7. Conclusion

The results of the study can provide a theoretical basis for the practical transition of general secondary education institutions to inclusive learning, as well as for re-evaluating views on inclusive practices. Education of children with disabilities is one of the basic and prerequisites for their socialization, full participation in society. Children with special needs should have equal opportunities with other children.

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