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MANAGEMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN KAZAN
MUNICIPAL ENTITY

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Abstract

The article lists and characterizes the key problems of managing inclusive education in Kazan municipal entity, among them: insufficient coordination of state and municipal authorities and educational and other establishments, absence of a single center of responsibility. The most topical problems are the low level of competence of the teachers, the unpreparedness of children and their parents to study together with physically challenged children, and poor informational-technical basis of psychological-medical pedagogical commission. The authors make comprehensive proposals to solve the revealed problems, with emphasis on the tasks of retraining and advanced training of educators and improving the conditions of functioning of psychological-medical pedagogical commission. In particular, the authors recommend organizing informational-consultative webinars on the legal base, various contests, and other aspects of inclusive education of children; creating a system of interaction of educators by the fields of teaching; forming an interactive platform for discussing the topical issues of inclusive education. It is proposed to organize publishing methodological literature on disseminating the positive experience of including the physically challenged children into educational process; to elaborate the norms of class sizes at schools and additional education establishments. Also, the authors propose to submit to the regional Ministry of Education and Science the initiative on increasing a number of professions related to working in the sphere of inclusive education, arranging exchange of pedagogical experience, extra payments to the educators' salaries.

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Keywords: Inclusive education, management system, Kazan, retraining and advanced training of educators, psychological-medical pedagogical commission.



1. Introduction

Researching the problems of inclusive education and searching for practical inclusive forms of supporting the physically challenged (further – PhCh) children are associated with measures for involving them into the children’s community and full-fledged life. This approach is determined by the demand of the society and the state and implies solving a number of problems and tasks related, in particular, to personnel training and retraining, to changing the public attitude to PhCh children, to legislative provision of the adaptability and variability of the educational establishment’s services and conditions. Solutions of these problems are largely determined by the specific features of a region, which is due to the evolution processes in the comprehensive and special education, as well as by the available resources and experience of implementing inclusive approach in education (Solovyova, 2014).

The main advantage of inclusive education for PhCh children is their adaptation in the society. Every child has the right for education and for inclusion into a usual children’s community. However, due to the problems in the management system of inclusive education in Kazan, many PhCh children do not have access to education. A situation of social inequality occurs; consequently, the constitutional rights of such children are violated.

2. Problem Statement

A large number of scientific publications are devoted to the problems of inclusive education development in different countries. The research topics are very broad; they comprise both conceptual issues and the difficulties occurring during its functioning, as well methodological experience (Carroll & Talton, 2016; Kilinc et al., 2017; Cunha & Xavier, 2016; Engelbrecht, 2006; Nugent, 2018; Sanagi, 2016; Savina, 2013; Tchintcharauli & Javakhishvili, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017, 2018).

One of the most popular fields of research by foreign scholars is pedagogical staff training for the inclusive education system, which is also considered in detail in the present article (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Panerai et al., 2009; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008; Song, 2016).

During the recent decade, inclusive education became an object of close attention of the Russian scholars (Tsyrilina-Spady, Jones, Cote, & Pierson, 2014; Solovyova, 2014; Miroshnichenko, Gerasimova, Khamitova, & Musinova, 2016).

The researchers from the Republic of Tatarstan contributed a lot to the topic development. Their scientific contribution is represented both by monographs comprehensively approaching the issues of inclusive education (Timiryasova, Ahmetova, Nigmatov, & Chelnokova, 2015; Sigal, 2017) and publications in journals and collections of works considering specific aspects of the topic (Ahmetova, 2013, 2017). However, there are no special publications summarizing the problems of inclusive education management in Kazan. The present article makes an attempt to partially bridge that gap.

3. Research Questions

- What factors impede the efficiency of the inclusive education management system in Kazan?
- To what extent are the comprehensive schools’ teachers ready for implementation of inclusive education?
- How to increase the efficiency of the inclusive education management system in Kazan?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to assess the state and development trends of the inclusive education management system in Kazan municipal entity and to highlight the factors which may facilitate or impede the introduction and development of inclusive approach in educational establishments.

5. Research Methods

- Analysis of scientific publication on the topic of inclusive education.
- Analysis of normative-legal basis in the sphere of inclusive education (State Program for 2011-2020 “Accessible Environment”, Federal State Educational Standard for PhCh children).
- Expert survey. The survey participants included the chairperson of Kazan psychological-medical pedagogical commission, heads and specialists of educational establishments where the inclusive approach is implemented – Municipal Budget Educational Establishment ‘School no. 156’, Municipal Budget Educational Establishment of Preschool Education ‘Kindergarten no. 163’.
- Secondary analysis of information (of the results of monitoring of schools’ activities in the sphere of inclusive education, carried out by State Autonomous Educational Establishment of Additional Education ‘Institute for Education Development of the Republic of Tatarstan’).
- Method of comparison.

The research showed a number of serious problems in the sphere of municipal management of inclusive education in Kazan. Among them:

- insufficiently elaborated normative-legal basis in the sphere of inclusive education in Kazan municipal entity;
- absence of a single responsibility center within the territory of Kazan municipal entity;
- poor interaction of Kazan executive authorities, state educational establishments, non-state educational establishments, and other organizations when creating conditions for parenting and training the PhCh people;
- insufficient informational-technical provision of the functioning of Kazan psychological-medical pedagogical commission (further – PMPC);
- low level of competence of educators working with the PhCh children, insufficient number of specialists able to work with such children (teacher-psychologist, social psychologist, special education teacher, logopedist, tutor);
- unpreparedness of healthy children and their parents to study together with the PhCh children.

In the list of revealed problems, the most topical for Kazan inclusive education management system are the low level of competence of educators, the unpreparedness of children and their parents to study together with PhCh children, and the poor informational-technical basis of PMPC. The present article is focused on analysis of these problems.

5.1. Low level of competence of educators working with the PhCh children

Increasing the quality of inclusive education in Kazan is directly related to forming the educators’ preparedness to work with the PhCh children. The insufficient level of psychological, professional, and

motivational preparedness of educators is one of the impeding factors of inclusive education development.

5.1.1. Psychological preparedness of educators to work with the PhCh children

The level of psychological preparedness of educators to work with the PhCh children under inclusive education in Kazan is low. Only one of six educators (15.6%) estimated the degree of their psychological preparedness of educators to work with the PhCh children as high (see Fig. 01).

As most of teachers have no experience of working with the PhCh children, they develop a psychological “barrier” – fear of the unknown. This reaction is quite natural; it is relating to the teachers’ desire to retain the habitual, hence comfortable, environment. Also, the fear of inclusive education is a consequence of poor awareness of the educators about the processes of integrating the inclusive education into the system of comprehensive and additional education of children. The poor awareness is observed, in particular, in regard to professional training and advanced training in the sphere of inclusive education. At that, a significant number of advanced training courses are intended for school teachers, while the offers for the teachers of additional education are scarce. This gap could be bridged by arranging informational-consultative webinars on such topics as legal base, various contests, and other aspects of inclusive education of children.

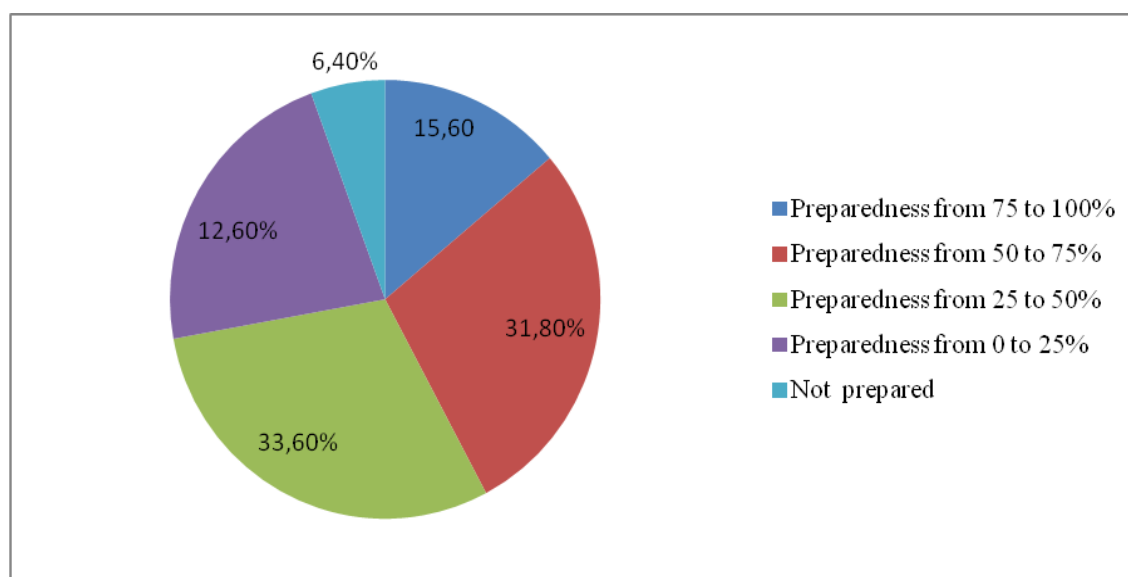


Figure 01. Degree of educators’ psychological preparedness to work with the PhCh children under inclusive education (Miroshnichenko et al., 2016, p. 6)

5.1.2. Professional preparedness of educators to work with the PhCh children

The level of professional preparedness of educators to work with “special” children can be estimated as insufficient. First of all, this refers to the lack of clear understanding of the expected results of PhCh children progress and elaboration of pedagogical techniques to provide this progress (see Fig. 02).

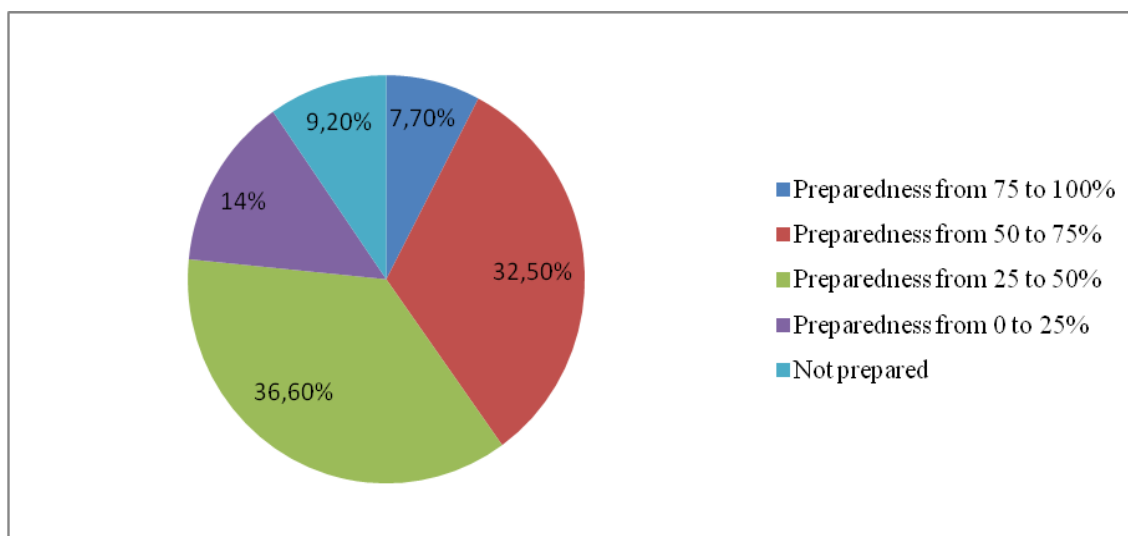


Figure 02. Degree of educators' technological (instrumental) preparedness to work with the PhCh children under inclusive education (Miroshnichenko et al., 2016, p. 7)

The quality educational process is possible with the account of medical diagnosis of the PhCh children and relevant recommendations for organizing lessons with them (maximal duration of a lesson, necessary medical and health-improving procedures, etc.). This approach implies cooperation of teachers with medical staff, special education teachers, and psychologists. These categories of specialists are available not in all educational establishments of Kazan. Their absence makes teachers vulnerable when working with the PhCh children, making them rely mainly on themselves.

Professional preparedness of educators can be enhanced by the state support in free of charge advanced training up to the level sufficient for working with the disabled and PhCh children. The higher level of professional preparedness can be achieved by organization of a system of distant and face interaction of educators by the fields of teaching, an interactive platform for discussing the topical issues of inclusive education. It is also relevant to organize publishing methodological literature on disseminating the positive experience of including the disabled and PhCh children into educational process.

5.1.3. Motivational preparedness of educators to work with the PhCh children

Pedagogical activities with the disabled and PhCh children demands a lot of spiritual and energy expenditures. To achieve useful results in teaching of a "special" child, a teacher should make more effort than when working with a usual child. In this regard, the additional effort of a teacher requires stimulation and reimbursement. This is proved by the research results: 38.6% of the polled teachers agree to work in classes where the PhCh children study together with healthy children if extra payment is provided (see Fig. 03).

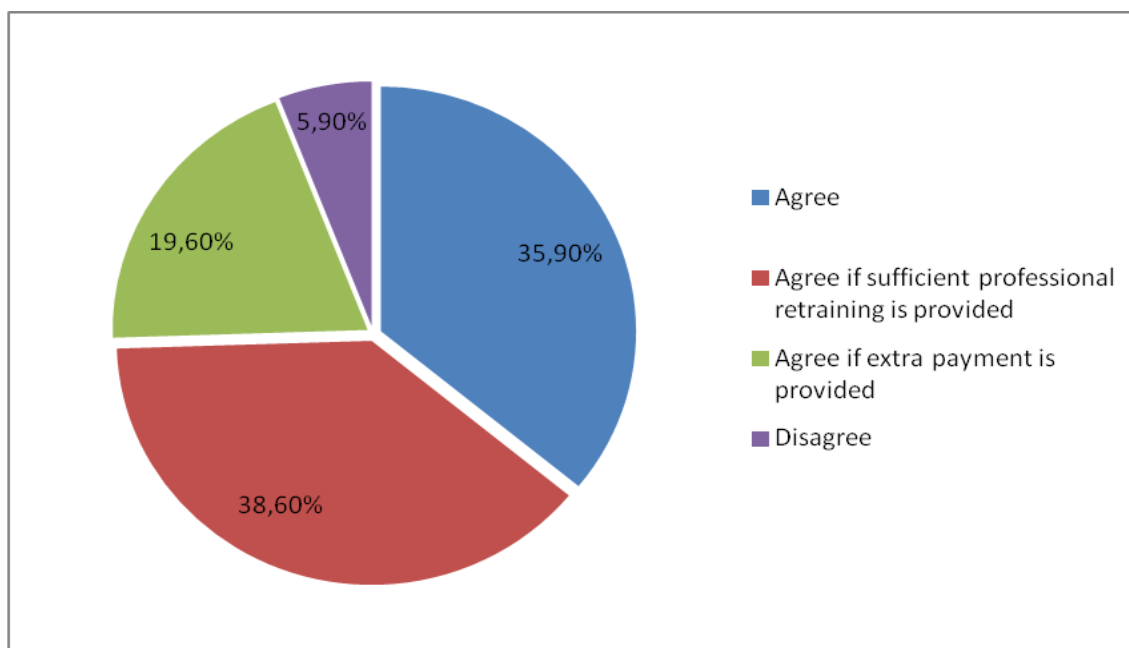


Figure 03. Conditions under which teachers agree to work in classes where the PhCh children study together with healthy children (Miroshnichenko et al., 2016, p. 13)

This problem can be solved by changing the normative basis of educational establishments, in particular, the norms of class sizes at schools and additional education establishments, and the norms of lesson duration for “special” children by nosology type and subtypes. According to experts’ opinion, for inclusive education to be effective, small classes should be formed, with one or two PhCh children for ten usual children.

The additional efforts when working with the “special” children might be compensated by introducing a position of a teacher’s assistant for this category of children. Another approach which can be considered is the one implemented by the state in the sphere of labor, when enterprises obtain reimbursement of funds spent for creating special working places for the disabled.

5.2.Unpreparedness of healthy children and their parents to study together with the PhCh children

In the recent years, a “social” model is often used to explain the causes of disability, according to which, the main cause of disability is the existing physical (“architectural”) and organizational (“attitudinal”) barriers, stereotypes and prejudices. The Convention on the rights of the disabled states: “Disability is the result of interaction taking place between the people with health disorders and the attitudinal and environmental barriers and impeding their comprehensive and effective participation in the life of the society equally with other people” (Convention on the rights of the disabled, 2006).

Within the Program “Accessible Environment”, a communication campaign was arranged in Kazan, aimed at overcoming the attitudinal barriers. In order to form the tolerant attitude of the society towards the PhCh people, to create a positive image of a disabled person, films and social advertising reels in two languages were made, thematic TV and radio broadcasts were arranged, as well as public-enlightenment campaigns and sociological research. However, this activity was not fully developed in the educational establishments of the city. About 60% of the polled teachers said that their schools had not

elaborated (or had elaborated but were not implementing) the courses for schoolchildren aimed at their interaction with the PhCh children. In the majority of schools, the programs for facilitating adaption of the PhCh children are not implemented either.

In this regard, the problem faced by a teacher during inclusive education implementation is the low level of tolerance in the society. According to the polled experts, parents are not willing to have their children study together with a PhCh child. Unfriendly attitude is observed among schoolchildren as well, especially in senior school. Not all teachers understand how the process of social adaptation can be made smooth for a “special” child. Many teachers are afraid of the probability of conflicts between the PhCh children and their peers, as well as parents. Forming the culture of tolerance in the society is one of the key directions of inclusive education implementation. The teachers, the parents, the administration of educational establishments should become confederates in this issue.

5.3. Insufficient informational-technical provision of functioning of the psychological-medical pedagogical commission in Kazan

One of the essential elements of inclusive education management system is the psychological-medical pedagogical commission. Based on comprehensive examination of physically or mentally challenged children, the specialists of the commission elaborate recommendations for organizing their teaching and parenting. In particular, they assist in choosing or changing the educational route for the PhCh children. The analysis of activity of Kazan PMPC, performed by the authors, allowed distinguishing several factors decreasing the efficiency of its functioning and, consequently, the efficiency of inclusive education implementation in the city in general. The list of problems includes:

- absence of official portal of PMPC, which significantly limits the possibilities for registering for visits to the commission specialists. Today, registering is carried out by telephone.
- excess bureaucratization, which is due to a large list of documents necessary for being examined by the commission. Collecting these documents is difficult and may become a kind of psychological barrier for the parents to apply for assistance in PMPC. It should be noted also that a child cannot be examined without any of the eight documents.
- small number of employees and, consequently, long queues and postponed examination in the commission.
- absence of possibility to be examined by PMPC in the place of residence of a PhCh child.
- the PMPC premises is small and poorly equipped for PhCh children.
- some parents do not clearly understand the purpose of applying to the commission (“educational establishment directed us”), which testifies to the inefficient communication policy of PMPC in the sphere of working with the population and educational establishments.

Inefficient legal basis: there is no clear list of a child’s state indicators, according to which a conclusion can be made. The conclusion is of advisory character. The parents often disagree with the commission decision, which leads to conflicts. Besides, the choice of educational establishments for the PhCh children is rather narrow.

6. Findings

Based on the carried-out analysis, one may define the main direction of improving the management system of inclusive education – creating an efficient system of professional retraining and advanced training of educators participating in teaching and parenting of the PhCh people, in the sphere of inclusive pedagogy. In this regard, we propose:

1. to elaborate programs for retraining and advanced training of educators in the sphere of inclusive education, as well as training seminars for the personnel of an educational establishment to form comprehensive (professional, psychological, motivational) preparedness of its personnel for inclusive practice implementation.

2. to arrange regular cycles of retraining and advanced training with further certification of personnel of social services and healthcare establishments, as well as those who have authority for working with the objects of inclusive policy.

3. to annually grant mayor's awards for achievements in working with the PhCh children and for outstanding contribution to inclusive education development.

4. to introduce initiatives in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tatarstan:

- on increasing a number of professions related to working with PhCh children (teacher-psychologist, social psychologist, special education teacher, logopedist, tutor) with higher education. It is these specialists that fulfil the bulk of tasks related to the PhCh children in educational establishments. It is necessary to define and elaborate the motivational approaches for the educators participating in teaching and parenting of physically challenged people;
- on arranging operative exchange of experience with the colleagues. It is necessary to arrange operative interaction both within the sector (school – correctional (special) school) and of intersectoral character (school – psychological-medical pedagogical commission – medical institutions – social services);
- on arranging extra payments to the educators' salaries for working with the PhCh children.

When introducing the above proposals, one should not forget about other conceptual aspects of the process of inclusive education management. Among them:

1. estimating the preparedness of an educational establishment for implementing the Federal State Educational Standard and a certain variant of adapted educational program. Each child is individual and needs an appropriate approach. Occurrence of problem situations during PhCh child adaptation to the educational establishment may not only hamper integration into the educational environment, significant for the child, but also cause unrounded fears.

2. improving the methodological and didactic provision of implementation of the adapted educational programs.

3. providing the monitoring of the quality of adapted educational programs' implementation to estimate the dynamics of the program mastering by a PhCh child.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the problem of inclusive education management is a comprehensive and disputable one; solving this problem affects a large number of people. The activity aimed at inclusive education

development is recognized as a priority at all levels of state authorities of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan, as well as at municipal level in Kazan. The society should grant any person the right to choose a type of education in compliance with their interests, needs, and capabilities. Without the informed solution of these problems, without observing the constitutional rights of the physically challenged children to education, and eliminating the manifestations of social discrimination, Russia is not going to become a truly civilized state.

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