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# TEACHER TRAINING FOR INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT: ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE

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### *Abstract*

The article is aimed at analyzing international and domestic experience in training teachers to better work in the conditions of inclusive environment. The results of this work show the predominant identity of research trends abroad and in Russia. Most authors dealing with the issues of teacher training for professional activities in an inclusive education environment consider not only the organizational issues of vocational education and functional components of training of inclusive teachers, but also address the problems of developments of personal traits of specialists working with children with special needs. The aspects of training teachers for the inclusive education system are being updated for universities. The paper discusses the domestic models of training teachers for professional activities in an inclusive education in the framework of comprehensive learning. It is noted that both international and domestic studies concentrate not only on the organizational and substantive aspects of professional training for inclusive education system, but also on finding solutions to the related problems aimed at the improvement of support system for teachers working in inclusive educational organizations. When analyzing domestic studies on the issues of teacher training for inclusive education, a tendency to intensify research in this direction, associated with the official consolidation of the status of inclusive education is revealed. The conclusion is drawn that the existing training models are not focused on the needs of teachers working in the subject areas with a lack of competencies necessary for high-quality organization of an inclusive educational process.

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**Keywords:** inclusion, inclusive education, teacher training, inclusive teacher



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## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays modern education both abroad and in Russia is linked with such concept as inclusion. The ideas of inclusion of people with special educational needs in various fields of social life are becoming increasingly popular and are supported at the state level. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the intensity of inclusive processes in domestic education has led to a number of problems related to the unavailability of the educational system to quickly accept new realities and adapt not only the material and techniques, but also the personnel component. Inclusion as a social idea and educational practice has existed abroad for quite a long time, but even this fact cannot ensure smooth development of inclusive education. In this case, the position of the Russian Federation regarding the implementation of inclusion ideas in education and society as a whole can be defined as “catching up” in comparison, for example, with the countries of Western Europe. We believe that the leveling of this situation is possible in the case of a deep analysis and generalization of positive experience of developing inclusion ideas abroad in the context of the educational realities of our country. The developments in the field of teacher training, formation of teachers’ readiness for specific types of activities in an inclusive education, the promotion of inclusive culture ideas, etc., since the teacher is, in fact, a conductor of ideas between society and the state, using educational resources.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Preparing teachers for inclusive educational environment is one of the key problems in the theory and methodology of vocational education both abroad and in Russia. Modern research covers aspects of this problem from the issues of supporting teachers at different levels of the functioning of the inclusive educational process to the aspects of development of inclusive readiness and inclusive culture of a modern teacher. Our study is aimed at analyzing foreign and domestic experience in training specialists necessary for the successful functioning of the inclusive education system. It is believed that its result should be a series of conclusions that will make it possible to systematically present the development of international and domestic ideas of inclusive education in the context of training problems and use positive experience in the educational realities of modern Russia.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the article is the analysis of international and domestic studies devoted to the description of current models of organization and the problems of training teachers in the field of inclusive education.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the present study is to analyze both international and domestic experience of preparing teachers for inclusive education, highlighting general world and domestic trends of professional teacher training, determining opportunities for its development in the context of inclusion ideas.

## 5. Research Methods

In the course of this study, the analysis and synthesis methods that made it possible to identify the main trends in the preparation of teaching staff for inclusive education environment both in Russia and abroad were used.

## 6. Findings

Various aspects of training teachers for inclusive education environment are being actively studied both in Russia and abroad. At the same time, it is worth noting that researchers are facing not only organizational issues of vocational education and functional components of training of the inclusive teachers, but also the development of personal traits of specialists working with children special needs. It is important that the issues of training teachers are considered not only at the level of professional education in high schools, but also at the levels of postgraduate and continuous education, as well as self-education and informal education.

Let us analyze the experience of foreign colleagues, described in sufficient detail in a number of studies. So, the American researcher Kim (2011) revealed the dependence of students' readiness for the inclusion on the type of professional education program. The author has identified three types of training programs in higher education: general, separate and combined. The general type of training is focused on preparing a teacher of general academic school without obtaining additional knowledge and qualifications in special pedagogics. The separate type implies the possibility (at student's request) to receive an additional skills related to the development of competencies necessary for inclusive education. The combined type includes the courses of general and special pedagogics, being, in fact, an analogue of the domestic Bachelor's program in the field of pedagogics, while assuming a degree that gives graduates the opportunity to implement their professional skills in the system of general or special education. An analysis of the results of work with different types of study groups showed that students who have mastered educational programs of a combined type are better prepared to work in an inclusive education when graduating the university.

It should be noted that in the United States the list of children with special educational needs is more diverse than in our country. In addition to typical disabilities such as hearing loss, low vision, learning disabilities, mobility disabilities and mental issues, various deviations in behavior and development are considered, which in our country do not correlate with the concept of disability and with the concept of limited health opportunities. Children with various somatic diseases, behavioral and learning difficulties are also active participants in the educational process, with which neurotypical peers, teachers and parents successfully interact. This is possible due to the activities on the development of students' readiness to work with children with special needs. Scorgie (2010) conducted a study using virtual courses for students, which included an interactive set of exercises that reproduced situations, and relationships that may arise at one time or another in a family raising a child with special educational needs. The immersion of students into the social roles of parents of children with special needs made it possible not only to develop emotional readiness and acceptance of inclusion, but also helped to stimulate the speed of reaction to the issues and search for their constructive solutions. The experiment conducted

by the author allowed us to conclude that the use of this form of work with students in the pedagogical areas stimulates the development of graduates' readiness for activities in an inclusive education. Moreover, a wider understanding of the phenomenon of inclusion determines the variability of the use of professional skills in various situations.

Jones (2010) considers the possibilities of using the Internet space in shaping the willingness of teachers to work in the conditions of inclusive education. The format of online training, according to the author, can be used as a means of supporting and consulting colleagues. The variety of possibilities of this type of training grants opportunity not only to support teachers, but also to create conditions for exchange of new ideas and experience with children with special needs.

A number of researchers note that the problem of teachers' rejection of children with developmental disabilities and their unpreparedness to work with them lies in the lack of awareness of teachers about physiological traits and difficulties they have in mastering educational programs. Besides, an additional barrier for teachers is the lack of knowledge about the methods of working with children with special educational needs, regulatory aspects of the arrangements of the educational process, etc. According to Čagran and Schmidt (2011), as well as de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) it is possible to solve the problem of training teachers for inclusive education environment by developing new and updating existing training programs.

Moreover, the establishment of centers for exchange of experience in organizing inclusive education at various levels is developing quite actively at the state level both abroad and in Russia. The examples are the Centers of Excellence in England (Brandon & Charlton, 2011). Brandon and Charlton (2011) note that the establishment of such centers stimulates constant exchange of experience with colleagues, allows solving the problems of teachers, including those related to self-doubt, a sense of isolation and loneliness in solving professional problems. The Russian experience in creating resource-based educational and methodological centers for training people with disabilities (Goryunova, Guterman, Kirik, & Romashevskaya, 2017; Yaray & Rokotyanskaya, 2016) is similar to the work of colleagues from England.

The supervision in relation to teachers of inclusive educational organizations is a common practice abroad and finds its place in Russia. The study of Mattson and Hansen (2009) describes the experience in Sweden in training supervisor educators for teachers who work in the inclusive classes. The activities of such teachers are welcomed by the directors of educational institutions and are considered as an alternative to retraining of teachers of secondary schools. At the same time, the supervisor acts as an active subject of methodological and psychological support for teachers who implement inclusive practices.

In general, foreign practices in the development of readiness of teachers to work in an inclusive education are reflected in the continuation of the similar activities of Russian researchers. A careful examination of them showed that in the domestic system of training teachers for professional activities in an inclusive education, two main areas could be distinguished, i.e. special and complex-oriented. The first is focused on the training of specialists in the specific fields (psychologists, defectologists, specialists in adaptive physical education and rehabilitation, etc.); the second is focused on the development of a

holistic readiness of teachers to work in an inclusive education. Let us consider some models of teacher training offered in both areas.

Works by Andrianova (2016), Ignatiev (2014), Kuzmicheva (2017), Cherkasova (2010), Yaray (2014), focused are focused on structural element description of training specialists in a specific field for an inclusive education system. Most of the models described by the above authors include motivation, cognitive, activity-based and reflective components with different variations of names, focused on the use of additional educational content that goes beyond the framework of the main educational program (various electives, special courses, online courses, etc.), and strengthening the practice-based component of training future specialists.

It should be noted that despite the fact that specialist training in special field is initially aimed at the acquisition by university graduates of special knowledge and competencies, however, few of them are ready for real work in an inclusive education. Work in a special educational institution with a child with special needs was initially provided with material, technical and methodological resources, organized in accordance with the requirements for this type of educational institution (with regard to the completeness of classes (depending on nosology), number of training hours, results of mastering educational programs and etc.). An inclusive educational institution often does not have all necessary resources. Moreover, a teacher who is a specialist in psychology, as well as defectology and other special fields work in the conditions of inclusive environment in standard class, for which the recommended number of children with special needs is defined, which, of course, may adversely affect both the process and the expected result of this work. Thus, such specialists need to have willingness to work in an inclusive education environment. At the same time, it is worth focusing on the development of psychological component of readiness and ability to work in a team with other subjects of the inclusive educational process.

Training models presented in the framework of complex-oriented direction are more diverse in structure and content of components. The researchers talk about the need to highlight technological component in such training models, which is due to the need for future teachers to master special methods and technologies for working with children with special needs (Voznyak, 2016). Attention is also focused on the methodological component of training (basic approaches and principles). According to Gorbunova (2017), in addition to the basic pedagogical principles (consistency, culture, success, humanization), implemented in the process of training an inclusive teacher it is necessary to take into account the following principles: corrective-compensatory orientation of education, activity-based approach in teaching and upbringing, creative activity. Consideration of these principles will allow implementing an integrated approach in the process of preparing a teacher for an inclusive education.

Modern researchers talk about the need to reinforce practical component regarding teacher training of inclusive classes, including the immersion into the inclusive educational process, increase of share of special and psychological as well as pedagogical disciplines in the preparation of teachers working with bachelor students, and the development of competencies necessary for continuous self-study and self-improvement in the postgraduate period. Currently, higher education, including training of teachers, involves modular approach of the educational process, which allows, on the one hand, to make training more variable, on the other hand, provides students with the opportunity to design individual educational paths. Another important circumstance that mainstreams the need to change the content of training of

future teachers is the introduction of Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education of the last generation (FSES 3 ++) focused on the needs of employers and professional standards requirements, which clearly indicate such a requirement for teachers as willingness to work with children with special educational needs, including limited health opportunities.

Kochetova and Maslieva (2015) define intersubjective approach as the most preferred approach for selecting the content and ways of preparing future teacher of inclusive education. It is believed that when preparing future teachers for an inclusive education, it is necessary to use a personality-based model, which accounts for the principle of conjugation of personal readiness and readiness for a specific type of professional activities” (Kochetova & Maslieva, 2015).

One of the most detailed and structured models for preparing future teachers for an inclusive education environment is the model proposed by Smantser and Kurbyko (2013), including regulatory, theoretical and methodological, motivation-targeted, informative, operational and technological, organizational and planning, emotional and volitional, evaluative and reflective as well as constructive and correcting components. Each component proposed by the authors is interconnected with and interdependent, which allows for the most complete coverage of all aspects of preparing students for an inclusive educational process.

In general, the domestic experience in preparing teachers for work in an inclusive education makes it possible to talk about its focus on the development of a unified complex result, which some researchers call an inclusive readiness, others name it an inclusive competency, some researchers relate to an inclusive culture. One way or another, all these concepts reflect general trend in the professional training of pedagogical personnel as a whole, which ensures the implementation of models aimed at the result achieving regarding professional educational program that will meet the requirements of federal state educational standards, professional standards, and qualification characteristics, and will make it possible to train a graduate who meets the expectations of potential employers in the framework of current tasks and modern education needs.

## **7. Conclusion**

The analysis of international and domestic experience in training teachers for inclusive education makes it possible to draw a number of conclusions:

1. Foreign studies conducted in the context of solving the problems of training teachers for professional activities in an inclusive environment are largely in tune with the research demonstrated by Russian authors. Moreover, the basic concept for most studies is teachers’ readiness to carry out any type of activity in the context of inclusion.

2. The presented studies are aimed not only at solving problem of preparing teachers for an inclusive environment, but also at the discussion of the issues related to the improvement of support system for teachers working in the inclusive educational institutions. The system that would motivate for professional activity and self-development in the process of inclusive practices implementation, developing personal and professional qualities essential for the teacher working in the inclusive medium.

3. There is an intensification of research focused on the search for universal models of training teachers for an inclusive education and mechanisms for the formation of future teachers’ readiness to

implement ideas and strategies for inclusion. For domestic research, this trend has been clearly observed since the entry into force of the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, which officially established the status of inclusive education at the state level.

4. The overwhelming majority of the presented models are focused on preparing for work in the conditions of inclusive education of future teachers, thus leaving without attention the group teachers who currently face serious problems associated with the need to organize a high-quality inclusive educational process with insufficient level of competency required for such work.

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