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# Problems of Implementing an Inclusive Concept of Educational Organizations of the Republic of Tatarstan

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## Abstract

An interdisciplinary study examines the problems of implementing the concept of inclusive education in the education system of the Republic of Tatarstan. An urgent problem is the lack of training of teachers of General education organizations to work with children with disabilities who have special educational needs, which makes it necessary to form professional competencies of teachers related to the development of the ability to design and implement innovative technologies of educational and correctional work aimed at achieving educational results.

The purpose of the study is to identify opinions of teachers about the difficulties of implementing the concept of inclusive education in the national educational system and their readiness to be active in the new conditions.

As the object of the author's research was chosen pedagogical discourse. Written works (essays) of primary school teachers and subject teachers were used as a communication space reflecting pedagogical discourse.

Discourse analysis was used as the main research method.

The results of the analysis of pedagogical discourse confirmed the research hypothesis about the lack of training of teachers of the General education system to work with children with disabilities and indicate that the common problem of all teachers is the lack of positive motivation to work; lack of special knowledge about the organization of the educational process; practical skills necessary to work with children with special educational needs.

The research data presented in the article gives grounds to say that the Republican education system should create conditions for the development of inclusive practices using the network interaction of educational organizations, health and social protection institutions, constant methodological support for teachers, innovative teaching experience.

*Keywords:* concept of inclusive education, children with disabilities, special educational needs, professional competencies of teachers, readiness for pedagogical activity in modern conditions, pedagogical discourse, network interaction.

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## **Introduction**

Currently, there are positive trends in the development of special and inclusive education for children with disabilities who have special educational needs.

In recent years, the Russian Federation has adopted a number of measures aimed at changing the organization and content of school education for children with disabilities: special Federal state educational standards, standards for the number of specialists in psychological and pedagogical support, and class occupancy have been approved and put into effect; approximate adapted basic educational programs of primary General education have been developed that provide for variation in training; there has been an increase in the number of inclusive schools that provide special conditions for students with hearing, vision, musculoskeletal, speech, intelligence, mental retardation, and autism spectrum disorders to receive education.

The analysis of the current state of inclusive education in the Republic of Tatarstan revealed a set of problems related to socio-economic conditions, insufficient resource base and other regional factors (Shaikhelislamov & Osipovskaya, 2017).

One of the key problems at the present stage is the lack of training of teaching staff of General education organizations to work with children with disabilities, which necessitates the formation of professional competencies of teachers associated with the development of the ability to design and implement innovative forms and technologies of educational and correctional work aimed at achieving educational results based on a person-oriented and individually differentiated approaches to students. According to Volkova (2018), "the socially conscious need to reform education "entails the search for" innovative approaches to teaching", which in turn require continuous professional development of teachers.

In the professional standard of a teacher, generalized labor functions are formulated, which determine the mandatory availability of readiness to carry out professional activities in accordance with the requirements of Federal state educational standards; the need to master "psychological and pedagogical technologies (including inclusive ones) ... for targeted work with various contingents" of students.

Availability of readiness for pedagogical activity in the new conditions is an important criterion that determines the possibility of strengthening and developing the human resource of the education system for children with disabilities.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

Purpose of the author's research is to identify the opinions of teachers about the problems and difficulties of implementing the concept of inclusive education in the national educational system and their readiness to be active in the new conditions.

### **Literature review**

Consideration of various approaches in scientific research allows us to determine that readiness for pedagogical activity is most often represented as an integral model, a special state of the teacher's personality, which is manifested in the interaction of several of its components: motivational-value, cognitive, operational-practical, emotional-volitional and reflexive (Blinova, 2015).

Khitryuk (2015) considers the teacher's readiness for professional activity in inclusive education as a "complex integral subjective quality of the teacher's personality", which is based on a set of academic, professional and socio-personal competencies and determines the possibility of effective pedagogical activity. At the same time, an important component of a teacher's professional and personal readiness to work with children with disabilities is readiness to provide assistance.

Gafari (2012) considers it important to have a positive motivation of a General education teacher to teach children with special educational needs. According to the author, teachers' beliefs and their recognition of the philosophy of inclusion are important prerequisites for the successful implementation of the concept of inclusive education. Motivation as the most important quality of a teacher confirms the importance of psychological readiness of teachers.

Kazakh scientists, interpreting the results of research of foreign teachers-practitioners who implement inclusive education, determined the structure of psychological and professional readiness, which acts as a complex of interrelated qualities that reflect the unity of personal, theoretical and practical readiness of teachers (Movkebayeva, 2013). At the same time, psychological readiness is defined as a set of personal qualities of a teacher, and professional readiness is defined as a block of didactic knowledge and methodological skills (Oralkanova, 2014).

We fully share this view. In the author's research, the readiness of teachers to implement the concept of inclusive education was interpreted as a set of interacting and complementary psychological and professional qualities that allow them to carry out professional activities, including organizing the educational process in accordance with the requirements of inclusive education, at a high motivational and value level.

### **Methodology**

Attitudes, opinions, assessments, stereotypes, perceptions of subjects of the educational process, as components of an integral model of readiness for pedagogical activity in the conditions of introduction and implementation of innovative forms and technologies, can be determined based on the study of their direct judgments, as well as on the analysis of mediated content (speeches of teachers at meetings and parent meetings; daily conversations of teachers with students, their parents; complaints from students and parents recorded in special documents, etc.). The analysis of mediated content allows us to identify deep expectations, personal attitudes, ideas, values, and stereotypes of subjects of the educational process related to the changes being implemented in the educational system.

As the object of the author's research was chosen pedagogical discourse. The concept of "discourse", popular in the social and human Sciences in recent decades, has different interpretations. In the most General sense, discourse is interpreted as a special way of communicating and understanding the surrounding world or a certain aspect of it (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2008).

Most of the modern actively developing discourse-analytic approaches rely on the definition of discourse given in Foucault's concept as "a group of statements limited by the rules existing in specific societies" (1972).

Van Dijk (1998), summarizing the interpretations of discourse used in modern socio-humanitarian and sociological theories, identified the following meanings:

- discourse as a social formation, denoting the socio-cultural features of societies;
- discourse as a mechanism of ideological socialization;
- discourse as a type of verbal production;
- discourse as a specific text or conversation;

- discourse as a genre;
- discourse in the broad sense as a complex communicative event;
- discourse in the narrow sense as a text or conversation.

In the author's research, discourse is interpreted as an actual, coherent in meaning oral or written product of communicative action, reflecting socio-cultural phenomena and processes at the microsocial level.

As a communication space reflecting the pedagogical discourse, there were written works (essays) of 174 teachers who implement programs of primary, basic and secondary General education (primary school teachers, subject teachers), who were trained in the Volga interregional center for advanced training and professional retraining of the Institute of psychology and education of Kazan Federal University on additional professional educational programs of advanced training, on the topic "problems of material, technical and personnel support for the development of inclusive education in the Republic of Tatarstan".

The subject of the research conducted by the authors is the assessment of the concept of inclusive education implemented in Tatarstan educational institutions by teachers and their readiness for pedagogical activity in the new conditions.

Discourse analysis was used as the main research method. Anonymity of the task performed made it possible to ensure the objectivity of the data obtained.

## **Results**

The analysis of the essay content showed a high level of awareness of teachers about the basic principles of inclusive education. The essay reflected all the main components of the conceptual model of inclusive education: the value of a person regardless of their abilities and achievements; the right of each person to interact and support; opportunities for self-realization and the acquisition of social, psychological and communicative experience; the development of a harmonious personality capable of a full, independent life in society.

The absolute majority of informants emphasized the high degree of relevance of the problem of inclusive education in modern Russian society, indicating as the main reasons the reduction in the number of special educational institutions, the increasing number of children with disabilities and the need for their successful socialization:

Informant 5 (primary school teacher, 8 years of experience):

*Since the number of children with disabilities is increasing every year, this problem is very urgent. Parents (legal representatives) want their children to be educated in a comprehensive school.*

Informant 17 (subject teacher, 11 years of work experience):

*Unfortunately, in recent years, despite the growth in the number of children with developmental disabilities, the number of special schools is decreasing.*

Informant 38 (primary school teacher, 15 years of experience):

*Every year the number of children with developmental disabilities increases. They should be included in the educational process for the effectiveness of their socialization.*

Informant 58 (subject teacher, 6 years of work experience):

*The problem is very urgent, Russian society for many years divided children into ordinary and disabled people, who were practically disenfranchised and had no opportunity for education and self-realization.*

The most significant advantages of the concept of inclusive education and its implementation in educational institutions were identified by teachers are:

- ensuring the right to education for all categories of children;
- creating the necessary conditions for effective training, education and comprehensive development of students, regardless of their individual characteristics and special educational needs;
- development of social skills that ensure effective socialization of children with disabilities and their successful adaptation in society;
- formation and strengthening of tolerant consciousness and behavior in relation to persons with special educational needs, respect for the individual;
- increasing self-esteem and independence of children with disabilities.

Informant 3 (primary school teacher, 12 years of experience):

*First of all, it is the availability of education in any educational institution. Secondly, social rehabilitation and integration of the child into society. And, third, the formation among children of different categories of tolerance, charity and respect.*

Informant 28 (subject teacher, 6 years of work experience):

*Creating special conditions for children with special educational needs, fostering tolerance and charity.*

Informant 47 (primary school teacher, 18 years of experience):

*A new social approach develops self-determination and self-determination develops equal rights.*

Informant 62 (subject teacher, 13 years of experience):

*Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination against persons with disabilities, and provide educational opportunities for all categories of children.*

Informant 70 (primary school teacher, 4 years of work experience):

A child with disabilities in the team gets an important social experience, begins to understand that external physical disabilities do not determine the attitude of other children.

Informant 79 (subject teacher, 12 years of work experience):

*We need to create a flexible, adapted educational environment that can meet the educational needs of all children and prepare pupils, teacher and pupils' parents to accept children with disabilities and create special conditions for training such children.*

Informant 128 (primary school teacher, 7 years of experience):

*A child with disabilities with the consent of their parents or legal representatives has the right to attend a normal school, and not in a boarding school, so his classmates help him, become kinder and more tolerant. They begin to perceive a classmate with disabilities like themselves and become tolerant.*

Informant 148 (subject teacher, 5 years of work experience):

*The concept of inclusive education enables children with special educational needs to interact with a wider range of people, develop social and communication skills, and find their place in society.*

The analysis of written works also shows that a common problem of all teachers is a low level of readiness for correctional and pedagogical activities, lack of positive motivation to work with children with special educational needs; lack of special knowledge about the psychophysical characteristics of students with disabilities, the organization of the educational process in accordance with the requirements of special Federal state educational standards, educational work, as well as practical skills necessary to work with "special" children.

Informant 7 (primary school teacher, 8 years of experience):

*We have already encountered the practice of inclusion. But it's very, very difficult. There are no necessary conditions, we faced difficulties in developing programs and difficulties in communicating with such children and their parents. There is a big number of children in the class. How do you manage to cover all of them with attention? The academic performance of ordinary children is decreasing. I have less time for them. By law, children with disabilities must be accompanied by Tutors. But in practice, everything falls on our shoulders...".*

Informant 15 (primary school teacher, 3 years of work experience):

*In addition to financial and material difficulties, I would like to note the difficulties that arise when developing adapted educational programs. I don't have enough experience, the necessary skills. There are also problems with the objective assessment of students with developmental disabilities.*

Informant 21 (subject teacher, 11 years of work experience):

*In my opinion, and I think many colleagues will support me, inclusion is good in theory, but in the real conditions of our school, this model faces many obstacles. It would be more effective to develop a system of special educational institutions where there are the necessary conditions and specialists: speech pathologists and speech therapists. We already have too much workload, and we need additional knowledge and skills to work with children with disabilities.*

Informant 39 (primary school teacher, 15 years of experience):

*It is hard to work in an environment where there are children with disabilities in a crowded classroom. This type of inclusion, which we are trying to implement, should be abandoned. Or you need to create special classes where teachers will pre-pass special quality training.*

Informant 45 (primary school teacher, 12 years of experience):

*How can you get a positive result if the conditions are not created beforehand and the database is not prepared? What results will we get from implementing an inclusive model of education if the necessary conditions are not available in schools? Neither teachers, students, or parents are ready to work like this. In addition to the heavy paper work there is adapted programs development. And from the management side, there is not even a hint of motivation or stimulation...*

Informant 56 (subject teacher, 6 years of work experience):

*I will express my personal opinion. Although, I have heard similar opinions from my colleagues, I have no desire or motivation to work in an inclusive classroom. Firstly, I am not psychologically ready to work with children with disabilities, and secondly, I do not have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies. This needs special training and, moreover, requires long-term training.*

Informant 87 (subject teacher, 19 years of work experience):

*One of the principles of inclusive education is tolerance. But in practice I face situations when a student with disabilities becomes an outcast, and his classmates laugh at him. This can result in psychological trauma if the child is not able to respond adequately to negative attitudes.*

Informant 135 (primary school teacher, 3 years of work experience):

*There is lack of knowledge of teachers about the features of psychophysiological development of children with disabilities, lack of information and methodological support and absence of speech pathologists, speech therapists and tutors.*

Informant 163 (subject teacher, 11 years of work experience):

*To be honest, our schools do not have sufficient financial support to create all the necessary conditions for teaching children with disabilities and to encourage teachers to teach them. And it just takes time for all of us to adjust and prepare mentally to work with this category of children.*

The informant 172 (primary school teacher, work experience 14 years)

*Not all schools are created accessible environment for children with disabilities, there is a lack equipment, special equipment, teaching materials. Usually, there is no disability specialists at school who could provide support of children with disabilities, moreover there isn't even a school psychologist.*

Analysis obtained in the study data allowed to identify the most significant problem areas and difficulties of implementing the concept of inclusive education in Tatarstan educational institutions. According to the informants, these are:

- insufficient funding and, as a result, the inability to create special conditions in the educational space for children with disabilities (material and technical, informational, software and methodological support);
- lack of qualified personnel, special training of the teaching staff;
- a large number of children in classes;
- increasing the educational and psychological load of the teacher;
- unregulated mechanism of material incentives for teachers in an inclusive practice;
- absence of psychological and pedagogical support specialists (speech pathologists, speech therapists, psychologists, Tutors) for children with special educational needs in General education organizations;
- low level of motivation of school children without disabilities and their parents to accept children with disabilities in an inclusive educational environment;
- psychological problems of adaptation of children with disabilities in a peer group;
- lack of developed and adequate assessment system for students' special educational needs.

## **Discussions**

Despite the high level of awareness of teachers about the basic principles of inclusive education and the recognition of the relevance of implementing the concept of inclusive education in modern educational institutions, the analysis of pedagogical discourse confirmed the research hypothesis about the lack of training of teachers in General education organizations to work with children with disabilities.

In our opinion, the most important stage of preparing the education system for the implementation of the concept of inclusive education is the stage of psychological and value changes, increasing the level of professional competence of teachers.

In-depth analysis and further monitoring studies of the readiness of teachers to work in the new conditions will improve the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education, monitor emerging problems and difficulties of inclusive practice of working with children with special educational needs.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the authors' discourse analysis indicate the relevance of the research problem. The discrepancy between the opinions of teachers about the need to implement the concept of inclusion in educational institutions and assess their readiness for teaching in the new conditions, as well as the existing capabilities of the educational system causes a decrease in the effectiveness of the development of inclusive education practices in regional educational institutions.

The obtained study data provides not only the necessity of teachers and specialists training in administrative management with initial theoretical knowledge of the basics of inclusive education principles of conductive pedagogy that will enable them to design inclusive educational environment, but also the application of appropriate remedial educational technologies of work with "special" children on the generalized material of foreign and domestic experience.

The Republican education system should create conditions for the development of inclusive practices, including through the use of network interaction of educational organizations, health and social protection institutions, providing the opportunity to fill in the missing human resources, conducting constant methodological support, receiving prompt advice on teaching children with special educational needs; systematic study and dissemination of innovative pedagogical and rehabilitation/habilitation experience; conducting comprehensive monitoring studies of the results of the educational process and the effectiveness of innovations. This is of particular importance for the professional and personal growth of teachers in General education organizations in the context of the development of inclusive education.

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ethics in scientific research.

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