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Adaptive Lesson Strategy as a Means of Individualizing Educational Activities

Tatiana V. Kuzmicheva* (a), Iuliia A. Afonkina (b)

(a), (b) Murmansk Arctic State University, 183038, Murmansk (Russia), 15 Kapitana Egorova street,
tvkuzmicheva@gmail.com

Abstract

The current problem field of modern education is revealed through the need to ensure the accessibility and quality of education and upbringing of children with different educational needs. Among them, children with special health needs should be identified as needing serious adaptation of all components of the educational system: goals and objectives, content, conditions, forms and methods, means of education. Monitoring of individual psychosocial development of students is considered by us as the most effective tool for quality control and timely correction of content and organization of educational process in conditions of inclusion. The article reveals the author's approach, which considers the resources of interaction of school specialists as the basis for achieving such changes. The study presented in the article is aimed at studying the professional behavior of a teacher and psychologist at different stages of monitoring the individual psychosocial development of a student with special health needs. The types of professional behavior of a teacher and a psychologist during their interaction ("isolation", "chaotic movement", "forced interaction", "purposeful interaction", "real cooperation") are distinguished. The need is justified and an adaptive lesson strategy is developed, which involves professionally valuable formats of interaction between a teacher and a psychologist at different stages of its design. Effective ways of overcoming meaning, operational and targeting barriers are defined on the basis of new dialogic formats of such interaction between specialists providing individualization of educational environment for students with different educational needs. The scale of the problem is determined, first of all, by the fact that the development of a scientific justification and the practical operationalization of the adapting lesson methods contributes to ensuring the inclusion of a student with special health needs in educational activities and increases its both academic and social success.

Keywords: inclusive education, students with special health needs, teacher-psychologist interaction, adaptive strategy.

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* Corresponding author. E-mail: tvkuzmicheva@gmail.com

Introduction

For many decades, both national and international research has focused on the problems of finding effective psychological and pedagogical technologies that contribute to the successful achievement of the quality of inclusive education. However, this problem has not yet been solved. Nevertheless, the evolution of the pedagogical consciousness and, accordingly, the professional activity of the teacher is moving in the direction of studying the characteristics and opportunities of the child, taking into account the diversity of educational needs of students in inclusive education and the obvious understanding of such changes in order to achieve high educational results (Kuzmicheva & Afonkina, 2020).

Among children with special educational needs, it is important to identify those who have limited health opportunities that hinder the mastery of the content of education if educational activities are not adapted to the peculiarities of their individual psychosocial development. Such an adaptation is a leading condition to their joint training and education with peers with normative development that will not reduce their success in mastering academic and life competencies, but will act as a way of inclusion in society.

The adaptation of educational activities is necessary for inclusive education; it allows the teacher to design and implement individual educational trajectories based on an understanding of the development specifics of children with special health needs, their life experience, worldview, activity, communication, etc.

It should be noted that one of the most important and, at the same time, difficult tasks of professional interaction between a teacher and a psychologist is monitoring the individual psychosocial development of a child with disabilities in an inclusive education, the stage of which is the transfer of psychological knowledge into the educational process (Korobeinikov & Kuzmicheva, 2019). Such a translation is possible with the joint design of an adaptive lesson strategy, when, on specific subject content, these specialists organize the sequence and content of cooperation between the teacher and the student.

Thus, a theoretical and empirical study of the nature and methods of interaction between a teacher and a school psychologist at different stages of monitoring, including the process of designing an adaptive lesson strategy, becomes relevant. The obtained research data will create a productive basis for the integration of general pedagogical and defectological theoretical knowledge for their immediate subsequent practical implementation in educational activities.

The purpose of the study is to identify the resources of interaction between a teacher and a psychologist in the process of designing an adaptive lesson strategy based on the results of monitoring the individual psychosocial development of a child with special health needs in an inclusive educational environment.

The objectives of the research are: to substrate the interaction resources of school specialists as a significant element of an inclusive educational environment; to identify the nature of the interaction of specialists and typologize their professional behavior when designing an adaptive lesson strategy.

Literature review

The mechanism for the development of an inclusive educational environment is its adaptation to the individual educational needs of students with special health needs, which are disclosed in the opinion of Ratner, Sigal and Yusupova (2016) not only in mastering the subject content of education, but also in successful self-development and the acquisition of a positive social experience by the child. Such adaptation is possible on the basis of a theoretical and methodological study of the process of interaction between school specialists and the creation on this basis of its new methodological formats.

Developed by Korobeinikov (2002) a model of functional diagnosis and the principles of constructing diagnostic procedures in the study of disorders of psychosocial development of children with special health needs are the scientific and medical basis for creating an individualized educational environment.

The expedient adaptation of the components of the educational system in the conditions of inclusion to the different needs of students involves value, organizational, substantive, didactic, socio-psychological changes, which are achieved not by individual time-disparate activities, but by the systematic efforts of all subjects of educational relations.

In the research of Ketrish (2018), the task is set to form a practical inclusive readiness among teachers, namely, organizational skills aimed at including students with special health needs in their activities, forming their educational activities, differentiating interests, maintaining motivation, etc., and information skills that are expressed in adaptation and accessible presentation of the material using various information tools.

According to the results of teachers' perception of the effectiveness of solving problems of inclusive education, they lack skills and knowledge for educational adaptation and modification of the educational process in order to support students with special health needs (Monteiro, Kuok, Correia, Forlin & Teixeira, 2018). It is also noted that teachers are insufficiently prepared to help their students with an inclusive curriculum (Baranauskienė & Saveikienė, 2018).

Significant transformations in individualization of educational activities are revealed through the search for tools for transforming the frontal learning strategy into a flexible strategy characterized by the adaptability of all pedagogical tools to the peculiarities of individual psychosocial development of a particular child. Such a strategy is called adaptive by us. When designing and implementing the adaptive strategy of the lesson, it is necessary to allocate, in addition to the spatial, temporal and methodological resources of adaptation by the teacher, the resources of interaction of teachers that are objectively important for the development of individualized practices of inclusive education. As Zaretskiy and Gordon (2011) rightly point out, the problem is not to integrate individual students into the educational system, but to transform it, following the principle of differentiation, it meets the diverse needs of all students and their individual educational needs.

The authors consider that, Leontiev's provision (2005) that the main features of joint activity constitute, firstly, the division of a single process of activity between participants, their inclusion in activity, and secondly, orientation to a single result of activity is essential for the study of professional behavior of a teacher and psychologist in a situation of interaction.

It should be emphasized that it is the polysubstitutional interaction that Alekhina and Vachkov (2014) analyzes in relation to a teacher and a student in inclusive practice, and the authors of the study propose to consider it relation to the teacher and psychologist, based on subjective relations. Unleashing new opportunities to develop the technologies necessary for the development of inclusive education, because it gives rise to reciprocal conditionality among actors based on creativity, awareness of the system of relations, the common semantic space, the transformation of the surrounding world.

The authors came to the conclusion that interaction resources make it possible to fill the deficiencies of the student with special health needs in the field of efficiency, communicative and emotionally strong-willed spheres, cognitive and speech activity due to the maximum adaptation of the content and organization of the lesson to its individual educational needs.

This statement of the question objectively leads to the need to study the nature of the interaction between the teacher and the psychologist in the process of their monitoring, which was the goal of the empirical study we have undertaken.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the research is formed by ideas about the unity of methodological, pedagogical, psychological and defectological approaches in solving the problems of inclusive education of students with disabilities (Alekhina & Vachkov, 2014; Korobeinikov, 2002).

The study used the proposed method of designing an adaptive lesson strategy to study the nature and characteristics of the interaction between a teacher and a psychologist.

The adaptive lesson strategy was carried out in the format of interaction between a teacher and a psychologist and was based on the principle of dialogicity. The regulation of such interaction was achieved by building in the methods of correctional and pedagogical assistance to the child, taking into account his special educational needs in the lesson situation.

The adaptive lesson strategy from the point of view of the content and methods of interaction between the teacher and the psychologist is represented by three modules that allow integrating psychological, pedagogical and defectological knowledge, thereby achieving individualization of the educational process.

Didactic module

The content of the interaction: specifying the existing and predicting possible academic and social difficulties of the student with special health needs related to the lesson topic and its organizational forms; determining the particular life experience of the student on the lesson topic.

Method of interaction is a dialogue: the “guide” method includes the following steps: expressing your own judgment on each of the issues discussed (“I believe that...”); argumentation of the judgment (“since...”); selection of examples revealing the specific facts of the child’s educational behavior (“for example...”); generalization., reflecting the relationship of diagnostic knowledge about the child and its projection in the specific educational situation of the lesson (“Therefore...”).

Content-operational module

The content of interaction: the correlation of the activities of the teacher and the student in the lesson, which involves: the development of variable ways of solving educational problems, completing specific tasks; determining the different types of assistance; determining the degree of autonomy at different stages of activity; selection of methods of stimulating pedagogical assessment of child’s activity, awareness of student’s activity, interaction with activity of other participants of activity, ensuring consistency of their actions, reflection.

Method of interaction is a dialogue: the “Piggy Bank of Ideas” method: for each meaningful position, a teacher and psychologist compiles a table where the first column indicates what needs to be selected or developed, the second identifies difficulties of the child, and in the third includes “brainstorming” the maximum possible techniques, which s are selected by discussion and mutual consent and integrated into the concept lesson.

Reflexive module

Content of interaction: establishment of content correspondence, organizational and methodological information support (resources) of the lesson and planned results of training of a specific student.

Method of interaction is a dialogue: the “Result Tree”: a graphical projection is created together, where a combination of lesson resources is shown in the form of tree branches, and planned results are shown in the form of leaves and fruits.

The study was conducted in 2020-2021 on the basis of educational organizations in Murmansk and the Murmansk region. It was attended by 60 teachers of primary and basic general education and 12 teachers-psychologists. To identify the nature of the interaction between the teacher and the psychologist, the authors proposed a diagnostic procedure that involved an analysis of the ways of their interaction.

The diagnostic procedure made it possible to typologize the professional behavior of a teacher and a psychologist in the format of their interaction and describe the professional barriers that hinder their interaction.

The following criteria for the typology of the professional behavior of a teacher and a psychologist in their interaction was proposed: dialogicity – the readiness and ability to speak reasonably, constructively discuss their opinion and the opinion of colleagues; motivating basis for interaction, unity / imbalance of interests; commonality / disunity of goals, ideas about the specifics of educational needs, about the expected result of interaction; the degree of agreement in the interpretation of a problem situation and methods of its resolution; expediency of unity and division of professional functions; coordination / discoordination of actions; systematic / episodic inclusion in joint activities; responsibility for the result.

Results

The following types of professional behavior of a teacher and a psychologist in their interaction have been distinguished.

The first type is “isolation” (12.5% of study participants). Experts express autonomous, unparalleled and poorly reasoned opinions about the problem situation. Motivation for interaction is not expressed. The imbalance of their interests, which, as a rule, are narrowly personal in nature, is obvious: from the desire to end the discussion as soon as possible and leave the interaction so as “not to waste time...”, to the desire to assert themselves at the expense of humiliating the opinions of others. There are no common goals, and ideas about the problem of the situation and the expected result of interaction are radically different and far from always related to the interests of the child. They may reflect, for example, the psychological protection of the specialists themselves, the desire to delegate their professional responsibility to others. They understand their professional functions as unrelated to the functions of other school specialists, which leads to a discordance of actions: everyone fulfills their tasks and strives to achieve their goals, zealously ensures that the boundaries of the professional field outlined by them do not intersect. Joint professional activities are absent or of formal nature.

The second type is “chaotic movement” (16.6%). The interaction is random, disordered in nature and is due to situational motivation – to overcome the professional discomfort. The professional interests of specialists are not balanced. Perceptions of the interaction are poorly correlated among different specialists, and can often be opposite. Inclusion in joint activities is episodic and short-term. Responsibility for the result, as well as consistency in the interpretation of the problem situation and the ways in which it is resolved, is not expressed.

The third type is “forced interaction” (39.0%). The motivating basis for the interaction is the understanding of the inevitable need to interact. The interests of specialists are accumulated in the field of desire to resolve the situation “as soon as possible and most painlessly” (which constitutes a common goal) and again act autonomously, while not always taking into account the interests of the child. Perceptions of the problem situation converge in individual positions, but are rarely interconnected and full-fledged. Professional functions are separated, but a certain field of short professional contacts is formed, which is difficult to call interaction. They are often formalized, for example, aimed at using the usual methods of organizing the child’s activities in the lesson. Individual actions can be coordinated, but inclusion in joint activities is episodic and unnecessary. Responsibility for the result is not shared and is attributed to each other or third parties, including the child. The degree of agreement in the interpretation of ways to include a child in the educational process is not important for specialists, they only need agreement on certain points. In general, we can say that the professional actions of specialists are summed up, while the new quality of these actions is not achieved.

The fourth type is “purposeful interaction” (22.2%). The professional interests of specialists accumulating in the field of achieving high-quality educational results are achieved. There is a general motivating framework: to act in the interests of the child, which determines the commonality of goals – to understand the causes of the existing conflict and determine effective ways to resolve it. The efforts of specialists are aimed at developing a dialogue for a common understanding of the problem by speaking and arguing. The degree of agreement in the interpretation of the individual educational needs of the child is quite high. The functions performed together and autonomously are clearly defined according to the intended purpose. However, actions are not always successfully coordinated, which prevents them from building systematic interaction, although they share responsibility for the result. In addition, specialists mainly use standard methods of joint activities.

So, professional actions of specialists are combined; they are given in a certain combination determined by meaning and purpose.

The fifth type is “real cooperation” (9.7%). The general professional interest of specialists involves creating the conditions most favorable to the development of the student, which is the meaning of their interaction. They are united by a stable motivation – to enrich student’s educational potential, and the general definition and implementation of the optimal educational trajectory. Interaction is provided on the basis of a coordinated and therefore objective understanding of individual educational needs in the correlation of the biosocial reasons that caused them, different contexts of its manifestation. During the productive professional dialogue, a general idea of the expected result of interaction as the maximum individualization of the educational process was developed, taking into account the variety of characteristics of the individual psychosocial development of the student. A high degree of agreement is achieved in the interpretation of the child's difficulties and ways of resolving them. The professional functions are feasible at all stages of interaction through continuous coordination of actions; optimal forms of systematic inclusion in joint activities are developed. A common and differentiated area of responsibility of each specialist for the result is determined.

Thus, professional actions of specialists are appropriately streamlined and integrated, forming a new context of their joint activities – cooperation.

The qualitative analysis of the types of professional behavior made it possible to identify professional barriers to the interaction of school specialists in relation to each type.

The type of “isolation” is characterized primarily by barriers that are associated with the lack of common interests, motivation to interact.

With the type of “chaotic movement”, barriers come to the fore, determined by inconsistency and the random, disordered nature of interaction, situational motivation and unrealized general goals. These two types are thus distinguished by semantic barriers.

The type of professional behavior “forced interaction” is characterized by barriers due to the external imposition of motivation for interaction and utilitarianism by situational goals. In general, there are barriers to targeting.

The type of “purposeful interaction” as a whole can lead to reasonable changes in the educational situation, however, operational barriers are objectified: insufficient ownership of ways of productive interaction at different stages of solving a problem situation.

It is important to note that the certain professional barriers are significantly associated with the factor of dialogue. With “isolation” and “chaotic movement”, experts do not seek to conduct dialogue and even avoid it. With “forced interaction” they lack dialogic skills. In the case of “purposeful interaction” it was often possible to observe “dialogue for the sake of dialogue” which did not lead to the development of concrete solutions. In the situation of interaction, built on the type of “real cooperation”, there was an extensive dialogue-discussion, the construction and selection of hypotheses, the definition of ways to test them and the adoption of balanced decisions that were specified in the practical actions of specialists.

The quantitative data given show a predominance among the types of professional behavior of “forced interaction”. The second most common type is “purposeful interaction” but does not exceed one third of the sample. The least important is the most productive type of professional behavior – “real cooperation”.

Discussions

According to the results of the study, among all other types of interaction, “real cooperation” occupies an insignificant place. The most important is the debatable issue of the ways of forming “real cooperation”, since most other types of professional interaction are not very productive. In our opinion, the concept of “professional trust” should be introduced into the discussion field of research as a necessary element of creating an inclusive educational environment, which can act as an effective way to stimulate the emergence of various forms of professional cooperation. It is also debatable to involve in the design of an adaptive lesson strategy on the basis of not only a teacher and a psychologist, but also a speech therapist, a defectologist, which will expand professional interaction and can act as a direction for further research on the research problem.

Conclusion

The identified types of professional behavior of the teacher and psychologist during their interaction, the qualitative and quantitative analysis showed the need to develop real cooperation. The proposed methods of interaction as formats of dialogue by the specialists of the lesson make it possible to achieve the following significant changes.

Firstly, to master professional skills in the individualization of the educational process, taking into account the educational needs and opportunities of a particular student.

Secondly, it is consistent to integrate psychological, pedagogical and defectological knowledge into inclusive educational practice.

Thirdly, to include all children in the course of the lesson, pay equal attention to all students, which will contribute to the positive dynamics of educational achievements of all students in an inclusive environment.

The issue of involving not only a teacher and psychologist, but also a speech therapist, a defectologist in the design of an adaptive strategy of the lesson appears to be debatable, which will allow expanding professional interaction and may be the direction of further research on the subject being studied.

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