VII International Forum on Teacher Education

Features of the implementation of inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities in the Scandinavian countries

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Abstract

The problem of implementing inclusive education is relevant for Russian society, which is at the very beginning of its solution. In our country, we are actively working to form a humane attitude in the public consciousness towards the categories of citizens who need help and support. In this regard, the appeal to almost half a century of experience of foreign countries in the field of inclusion, its study and critical analysis to consider the possibilities of applying it in practice, considering the national characteristics of our country, seems to us justified and useful. This study attempts to understand and characterize the features and unique specifics of the organization and implementation of inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities. Nordic countries, traditionally and historically, the system of inclusive education was the first countries to be based on the adoption of the principle of «normalization», which allows people with special health conditions to lead a daily life and live-in conditions as close as possible to those of ordinary people in an ordinary society. The Swedish Education Act states that children are entitled to special support for development and education based on equality, participation, accessibility and camaraderie. The purpose of the study is to review the experience of the theory and practice of inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities in the Scandinavian countries using a set of general theoretical and scientific-pedagogical methods, as well as comparative and explanatory methods of comparative pedagogy.

Keywords: inclusion, education, children with disabilities, visual impairment, ICT-technologies.

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Introduction

Today, inclusion is an important area of activity of world communities in the field of education and social policy of states. Opponents of this process advocate restricting children with developmental disabilities from choosing their place of study and working with them in specialized educational institutions. Supporters of inclusion argue the need for teachers and specialists to conduct correctional activities with such children in the usual conditions of general education schools. Both approaches are scientifically sound and have experimental evidence. Integration should ensure the right of each student to choose the place, method, and language of instruction; create conditions for children with special health and development conditions that are adequate in terms of the quality of special educational services, on the one hand, and on the other - the possibility of full inclusion of such children in the educational process of a general-purpose educational organization.

Integration is a two-way process involving joint efforts both on the part of the child and on the part of the environment in which he or she enters, which is considered as a natural and characteristic evolutionary path of integration development, different from the revolutionary one. Then the main direction of inclusion in the activities of the educational institution becomes the focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities into school and classroom community of their normal peers and adults as equal partners, just differing in their special needs. Among the first of all countries, the Scandinavian countries are based on the adoption of the principle of "normalization", which allows people with disabilities to lead a daily life and live in conditions as close as possible to the living conditions of ordinary people in ordinary society. The Scandinavian countries have unique specifics of the organization and implementation of their experience, they were among the first to successfully solve to a certain extent the problem of ensuring a normal life for all categories of citizens in need of help and support from the state and society, including those with health problems.

Purpose and objectives of the study

In this study, it is supposed to study the theories and ideas of social inclusion, as well as to consider the experience of implementing inclusive education in the Scandinavian countries. The "theory of normalization" proposed to the world community by the Scandinavian countries (Benk-Mikkelsen, 1959; Nirdje, 1968), with its key idea of normalizing the conditions of social life for people with intellectual disabilities in accordance with international legal acts, has been realized practice of social services, and the education system in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

In this study we will try to theoretically justify the success of the implementation of inclusive education in these countries by socio-cultural conditions of their development, the peculiarities of social inclusion practice in them, built on the economic model of "Scandinavian socialism", the humanistic paradigm of social consciousness that has developed in these countries, its high level of understanding problems of people with disabilities, health, a certain social status and position.

It seems to us that today there is an urgent need to comprehend the essence of inclusion in general on the basis of respect and recognition of the rights of all people to a decent education, understanding its problems and challenges of the current stage of development of society, finding effective ways and means of including children with special needs and health in education and social life, and not teaching them in special institutions or at home, in isolation from communication with peers and the whole world.

Literature review

The essence of the term inclusion in the context of the typology of Ainscow and colleagues (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004; Alur & Timmons, 2009) suggests that inclusion is seen as a process aimed at educating people with disabilities and as a mechanism for developing "schools for all", including other persons in the category of "special educational needs" (migrants, people in need of support and assistance, people in difficult life situations, people with deviant behavior, the talented, different religions and ethnicities). Social inclusion, based on the principles of accessibility and inclusion, and the values of social life that contribute to the promotion of anti-discrimination measures, the effective improvement of the global educational system, and the provision of high-quality education and profession to all its citizens, is recognized today as a priority direction of state policy of the leading world powers. Its main provisions are enshrined in the documents of international law and international organizations (Salamanca Declaration of Persons with Special Needs, 1994); (Incheon Declaration, 2015); Documents of the OOE General Assembly, the UNESCO World Forum, the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, etc. They note that the personal development, formation and self-realization of each person are central to the educational paradigm that determines the goals, values, essence and direction of the development of modern education.

UNESCO understands educational inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all students through their participation in learning, culture and communities, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, geographical location, need for special education, age, religion, etc.

(UNESCO Education for All Program), and the documents on inclusive education state that schools should accept all children, regardless of their physical, mental, emotional or other capabilities; It should educate both children with disabilities and children with disabilities, street children and working children belonging to isolated or nomadic groups, linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, as well as children belonging to other vulnerable or marginalized groups (the Salamanca Declaration, 1994).

In the context of this study, the problems of education and socialization of children and young people with disabilities draw us to the limitations of their connection with the world around them, nature, the poverty of contacts with peers and adults, limited mobility and communication with people, access to cultural values and elementary education. Within the framework of inclusion, children with disabilities should be included in the general education system and raised together with their peers. Inclusive education not only enhances the status of children with special educational needs and their families, but also contributes to the development of social equality in society as a whole and the formation of a humane attitude towards them. Inclusion for such categories of children is a way to eliminate all forms of exclusion and discrimination (Winblad, 2013; Robinson-Pant, 2020). For many decades, numerous foreign scientific and pedagogical discussions and studies have focused on the problems of finding effective strategies for the practical implementation of the theoretical foundations of inclusion, which contribute to the achievement that the learning system adapts to the child, and not the child to the system (Mitchell & Borisova, 2009; Booth & Ainscow, 2008). Inclusive education as a research and practical problem is also relevant for Russia, since domestic education is still at the very beginning of this path, and although our country is also actively conducting research and developing the basics of inclusion, according to experts (Yarskaya-Smirnova, 2005; Suntsova, 2013 and others), Russian education system, as well as abroad, faces the problem of implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Methodology

What are the theoretical and methodological foundations of inclusive education and the prospects of their study, taking into account the philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of educational integration and inclusion?

 The research is of a theoretical interdisciplinary nature, it is based on the conceptual ideas of foreign and Russian scientists on the problems of the philosophy of social inclusion, integration of education: Parsons (1951) on the organization of integration processes in social systems; Bank-Mikkelsen, Kugel and Wolfensberger (1969) on "inclusion", "normalization"; Slee and Allan (2001), Dimenshtein and Larikova (2000) on the reliance on the ethical imperative of state legislation in relation to people with disabilities; accessible education and equal educational opportunities Goodlad (1996), Crosland (1962), Konstantinovskiy (2008), Frumin (1996); integrated inclusive education of foreign and domestic humanistic psychology, and pedagogy Hellbrugge (2001), Nazarova (2013), Yarskaya-Smirnova (2005), Suntsova (2013). The research is based on philosophical and anthropological (Borytko, Solovtsova & Baibakov, 2007) and axiological approaches to social integration (Slastenin & Chizhakova, 2003), social and educational integration of disabled children (Zaitsev, 2003), and constructivist approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1995; Jerjen, 2003).

The study used a set of general theoretical and scientific-pedagogical methods aimed at studying inclusive education and identifying its features in children and young people with disabilities in the Scandinavian countries, comparative and explanatory methods of comparative pedagogy.

Results

Analysis of theoretical sources on the problem, the results of research (Dovigo, 2017; Watkins & Meijer, 2016) indicate that the Scandinavian countries are distinguished historically and traditionally developed in their system of social protection, which allows to provide all its citizens equal opportunities in the realization of their rights to life, health, education, and work. In addition to the public services of free education and universal health care - public spending on them in Denmark, Sweden and Norway is significantly higher than in other countries, inclusion is actively postulated-not as an infringement of the rights of healthy students in favor of children with disabilities, but the next stage in the development of society when education becomes a real right for all. The dominant ideas of inclusion and the conditions of development of these countries have allowed them to build and optimally use the most flexible and convenient system of inclusive education, which takes into account the needs and capabilities of each of their citizens, including people with disabilities, which is an occasion for studying and understanding this experience. The practice of integrated education for children with special needs and health in the Scandinavian countries shows that the education and socialization of these children and young people will be effective if they are included in the social environment and educational space of ordinary children, when the way of common school life becomes familiar for such children.

Then, on the one hand, children are integrated into the classroom and school educational space "not like everyone else", which leads to the need for changes in the internal conditions of the institution, the creation of new mechanisms for the interaction of relations and the formation of relations of all participants as subjects of the educational process (teachers, educators, tutors, volunteers, adult parents and students themselves). Due to the diversity of educational inclusive practices used in the Scandinavian experience, the very concepts of inclusion and inclusive learning have significantly expanded, and constructivist didactic technologies are actively developing, providing individualization and personalization of children's learning, which are emphasized in inclusive education in Scandinavia. On the other hand, the Scandinavian experience of inclusion has shown that even with a significant investment in the development of inclusive ideas, compliance with legislation and the presence of social tolerance in society, high-quality education and social adaptation are not always provided to children with disabilities. The mass educational system, solving its own complex tasks of teaching, educating and socializing ordinary children and young people, cannot indefinitely modify the educational process, the diverse types, forms and methods of education in teaching ordinary children, in combination with their disabilities and deviations of children with special development and health, and the means and methods of teaching that meet these special educational needs, without compromising the solution of constantly existing general educational tasks.. Inclusive practice has shown that often the presence of children with severe and multiple disabilities in general classes does not benefit them or ordinary students. The mass education system has and will inevitably have certain boundaries and frameworks for the implementation of inclusive ideas. It is no accident that the current stage of the development of inclusion is characterized by "reasonable pragmatism" based on common sense. The long-term practice of implementing inclusion in developed countries leads scientists and practitioners to understand the need to make changes both in the theoretical part of the inclusive project and in the technology of its implementation. The diversity of inclusive education and the participation in it of children who do not have severe developmental disabilities and have received high-quality correctional and compensatory assistance since early childhood, the preservation and further development of the special education system for children in need of it; recognition of inclusion as a part of the educational system-this is the vector of development of inclusive education at the present stage in the advanced countries of the world.

Discussion

The research confirms that at present stage of development of world community, inclusion remains the most important direction of educational systems activity, the ideas of social inclusion and theory of equal rights for everyone and ensuring equal opportunities are still basic for the stability of country. However, needs to mention that world practice has some cases with social segregation and social equalit (Slee & Allan, 2001; Cobello, 2016), still remains extremely relevant and unresolved problem of professional and psychological training of teachers (Florian & Lanklater, 2010), that work with children with health disabilities. Also there are some questions about building of humane attitude both in community to various categories of people, that needs care and support, and within teachers to their students – children with special needs (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2010). There is growing disappointment with social inclusion within parents of these kids Rogers (2007). Despite the integration processes have been successfully implemented for a long time in a history of countries development, the majority of these countries are still have not achieved the desired level of educational inclusion, special training of teachers, also we observe hidden, but still existing resistance to educational inclusion in mass school practice. Additional difficulties caused by high cost of integration programs and inclusive courses, and absence of stable sources of funding.

Group of Scandinavian countries are ahead of the most other countries, despite the fact of significant differences between them – each of them has its own economic and social models, there is something that is common to them in solving problems of educational inclusion and allows to talk about unifying foundations. The development of theoretical foundations of inclusive education is devoted to the works of Stukat (1978), Bulow (1972), Karrby (1975), Rothe (1971).

Gannerud-Menssen and Torner (1973) and Turner (2014) provide solutions of the problem of practical implementation of inclusion and examples of specific training program and courses.

Scandinavian models of social inclusion are characterized by striving for the greatest employment of the population, respect for equality between ethnicities, genders, the social status of citizens, beliefs, egalitarian and extensive social benefit and redistribution of benefits. These models of broad social welfare are «broad individualism» and personalism. These declarations are transferred to educational inclusion and becomes the basis for choice and development of constructivism in practice, as the most important approach in solving the problems of inclusion, the choice of means, ways and methods of implementation programs of inclusion, the successful implementation of point, partial and full inclusion. How does constructivism work in inclusion? From its positions, the deficit of people with disabilities is proposed to be considered in terms of restoring the dynamic equilibrium between them and the system of their surroundings.

Different scenarios of this development are presented – they concern both the changes that occur in the environment and are important for each person's self – development, and internal changes by their own self-development based on individual trajectories. The methodology of constructivism substantiates and ensures the development of pedagogical technologies of inclusive education (the constructivist didactics) in its organization, forms, methods, techniques of work in line with the requirements of inclusion. Emphasis is placed on their modification (change, transformation, adaptation) in accordance with individual educational needs and capabilities of students – the appropriate organization of subject – space, activity and social surroundings of the class and school. In practice such school models of inclusive education as "Montessori class", Scandinavian model of "temporary working group", "flexible class", ICT-technology, etc. are successfully implemented and built on the theory of autopoiesis, which provides each student with an individual educational route if there are active communication and social environment, with activity-communication check of adequacy of acquired knowledge, skills, formed intellectual constructs.

ICT tools for learning include learning software and virtual learning environments. It is important that educational organizations provide and use ICTs in accordance with the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Regardless of the state's regulatory framework, legislation in all countries tries to cope with the difficult task of providing accessible, user-friendly and effective ICTs for persons with disabilities.

In Sweden, schoolteachers are responsible for teaching students in Braille. Blind children have an additional teacher or an assistant who is responsible for teaching mobility and computer skills. Blind children receive training once a year at the National Resource Center. The clinic for visually impaired is responsible for teaching daily living skills.

Willermark (2021) study aims to explore aspects of interaction in a virtual classroom in Sweden. The study includes a survey of general education teachers and ten seminars. The results show a multifaceted picture of interaction with students, including both an increase and a decrease in contact, as well as control. In September 2019, the symposium "Rethinking Learning, Education, and Collaboration in the Digital Age - from Technology Creation to Culture Transformation", held in Engeltoft, Sweden, analyzed design opportunities and design tradeoffs in relation to digital technologies and learning, exploring design strategies for systematically and actively increasing the contribution of digital technologies to learning and collaboration.

Practical examples of the use of ICTs in education confirm that the introduction of new technologies is an important prerequisite for solving the fundamental problem of transforming education as promising future alternatives to schooling (Fischer, Lundin & Lindberg, 2020). The creators of any educational content should take into account the individual characteristics of persons with disabilities.

Despite the general trend towards the popularization and dissemination of accessible education, the problem of using distance-learning technologies in the educational process of secondary schools for children with disabilities in the context of modern educational practice is relevant.

Constructivism gives each student the opportunity not only to construct their own mental reality, but also to test their own constructions for their adequacy and vitality in different types and forms of common cognitive and other activities, which are presented in different models of inclusive learning. An important role in this case belongs to communication, with the help of which it is possible to adjustment of the ideas of each student in accordance with other participants in the cognitive process. Thus, the necessary socially significant constructs are formed in individual and joint activities, which are manifested in independent decision-making, responsibility for them; in mastering the skills to agree, give in, enter into a dialogue, help another, creatively work together in a group. At the same time, an important fact is noted that in these same types of activities, the same necessary and socially significant constructs are formed in other students - with normative development. Teachers should encourage such forms of cooperation and interaction between "special" children, integrated with ordinary schoolchildren. Examples of such interaction are mastering the technique of communication with children with disabilities: the learning and use of dactylology when communicating with a deaf child, the skills of helping children with locomotor disorders moving in a wheelchair and others. At the same time, various pedagogical technologies are used to strengthen the individualization, personalization and differentiation of the educational process: programs "Learning together and individually", "Team games-tournaments", "Group research", "Constructive dispute", "Studying achievements in a team", "Learning in collaboration", "Reverse roles", "Mutual learning"). The involvement of parents, volunteers, teaching assistants, specialists, psychologists to ensure the implementation of inclusive individual programs is encouraged. All these forms help to reduce the risks of inclusion, expand the number of participants in inclusive education, and improve the quality of cooperation between them.

Conclusion

So, inclusion is a change in the educational system and acceptance of the child at the school-wide level. Inclusive education provides for not only the active inclusion and participation of children and adolescents with disabilities in the educational process of the regular school, but also recognizes the value of the differences of all children without exception and their ability to learn in the way that is most suitable for the child. Thus, the learning system adapts to the child and benefits all children, new approaches to learning are used, children with special needs can be in the classroom full-time or partially, learning with support and according to an individual curriculum.

The vector of development of inclusive education is associated by scientists with the multivariance of inclusive education and the participation in it of children who do not have severe developmental disabilities, who have received high-quality correctional and compensatory assistance since early childhood; the preservation and further development of the special education system for children who need it; the recognition of the reality in which inclusive education is only a part, and not the entire educational system. At the same time, it becomes obvious that for the development of the inclusive education system in Russia, it is necessary to change the methodology and introduce integration innovations in the educational space and environment, it is important to bring into line at the state, regional and municipal levels all subsystems (educational, social, regulatory, economic) that are directly or indirectly related to integration processes. To ensure effective inclusive education, it is important to highlight such areas of activity as the system of educational verticals, organizational conditions for the development of inclusive practices in specific educational organizations; the use of the potential of special institutions with the functions of resource and methodological centers; the development of technology for psychological, pedagogical, scientific and methodological support for all levels of inclusive education.

Inclusive practice has shown that the mass education system has and will inevitably have certain boundaries and frameworks for the implementation of inclusive ideas. Not always a mass educational system, having its own complex tasks of successful education of a huge and diverse contingent of ordinary children and adolescents, is able to provide children with disabilities with high-quality education and social adaptation without compromising the solution of constantly existing general education tasks for ordinary children.

In addition, due to the diversity of educational practices, the very concept of inclusive education has expanded. Any structure of mass or special education, which includes in its educational process students, pupils who differ in their psychophysical capabilities and, accordingly, in the nature of special educational needs from the main, basic contingent, is already inclusive.

For example, if in a group of kindergarten for visually impaired children there are several children without visual impairments with normal development, it can also be considered inclusive. This is why individualization and personalization, which are emphasized in inclusive education in Scandinavia, are so important.

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