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Special Education vs Inclusive Education in the Synergy of Educational Environments

Abstract: Inclusive education in Ukraine can be considered a modern approach to both general and special education. For providing the best conditions for obtaining a proper education for every student, irrespective of their social status, gender, colour of skin, state of health, etc. it is essential to provide a professional environment, support and assistance at schools for those who need it, as well as creating a healthy educational environment in the students' group. The problem is accomplished by the fact that not all students with special educational needs are recommended or able to visit public schools because of the extent of their condition. Therefore, the role of special education in this regard should not be ignored. The article aims to analyse global scientific approaches to special and inclusive education and to provide an outline of the comparative characteristics of three types of schools: special school, school with integrated study and inclusive school which is of great importance for the development of inclusive education in Ukraine.

Keywords: special education, inclusive education, educational environments, special school, school with integrated study, inclusive school.

Introduction

Inclusive education is gaining increasing popularity in modern pedagogical science and takes a notable place in the reforming of the general education system in different countries.

For the last few decades, special and inclusive education as pedagogical phenomena have been in a state of constant comparison or even opposition. The contradiction which is hidden in the name of the article can illustrate what is going on now in Western Europe, in Ukraine in particular, where the implementation of inclusive education is taking place. Instead of the cooperation of these two educational spheres, a vivid opposition can be observed. Therefore, the presented article is aimed at finding out how the problems of inclusive and special education are studied by British and American scientists and how these studies can help Ukraine in the implementation of inclusive education. Thus, the aim of the article is to make a comparative description of inclusive and special education systems presented in international scientific literature.

Current issues on inclusive education

American scientists analyse the American experience in implementing inclusive education in the general education process from three points of view – the conceptual, the historical and the pragmatic. Conceptually, the precise definition of inclusive education is still under debate among scientists at the level of the specification of the term. It can be studied as a process of involving children with special educational needs in working in a general education environment as well as the transformation of the philosophy, values and practices of the general education system considering the needs of special children. However, the basic concept of inclusive education still includes not only the presence of children with disabilities in school but also their participation in educational programs alongside other members of the education process (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

Inclusive education is a phenomenon that concerns all children involved in the study process. It is aimed at the transformation of the school culture and intends to increase the presence of not only the socially excluded and disadvantaged (outsiders) but all its members in the education process; to intensify the adoption process of these students to the community by the teachers and other "normal" students; involve all students in the classroom and extracurricular activities of the group, and as a result to achieve socialization as a positive result of this work (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughn, Shaw 2000).

The American researchers Alfredo J. Artilez, Nancy Harris-Murri and Dalia Rostenberg pay attention to both the history and theory of special education in the analysis of the concept of inclusive education. In terms of the historical aspect, it is clear that special education has become a common alternative to general education for people with disabilities. Special educational institutions are divided according to nosological groups. According to each group, there is a curriculum adapted to the capabilities of students depending on the condition. This aims to develop disabled children's social and practical skills needed to survive in adulthood. Historically, students with disabilities were excluded from the process of obtaining a complete general education according to a unified curriculum as well as being deprived of communication with their peers. This led to the segregation of people with special needs and subsequently to the professional division of labour. However, foreign scientists who conducted a comparative study among students in special schools and inclusive classrooms argue that pupils with special educational needs who studied according to segregative educational programs, were different from the success of their peers who had the opportunity to attend comprehensive school (Artiles, Harris-Murri, Rostenberg 2006).

Another group includes children with weak health deviations but who are forced to study at special educational institutions. These children are deprived of the opportunity to communicate with their peers and consequently of the normal functioning in the society. In this context, inclusive education is a tool that can destroy this division. It is unsurprising that experts in the field of special education and its direct participants

are actively involved in the implementation of inclusive education in the general education process.

Two more phenomena that deserve attention in the context of the study of inclusive education are globalization and multiculturalism. Globalization involves inclination to changes in social, political, economic and public life due to the exchange of capital, information and communication technologies as well as mobility of population, culture and management systems (Lipsky, Gartner, 1996). This leads to the rise of multiculturalism in a number of countries with a high rate of immigration. It should be noted that many students whose families have emigrated retain extremely close ties to their national culture and, as a result, this leads to complications in the new communication society, an unwillingness to learn the language of the country where they live and, consequently, difficulties in learning. Inclusive education cannot ignore the demographic demands of the modern world. So, apart from children who have disabilities, it is necessary to distinguish those who are immigrants, and therefore often do not speak the language of instruction at their schools at a sufficient level for learning. This is another category of children that provides implementation of inclusive education.

From a pragmatic point of view, the reform of the general education system and popularization of inclusive education as an indispensable component of comprehensive schools helps develop teacher's professional competences, reinterpret the main goal of the comprehensive school, review and improve the curriculum, create the conditions for professional development of teachers, and most importantly, obtain positive learning outcomes from each participant in the education process, regardless of their state of health or social status (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

The American researchers Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky and Alan Gartner argue that contemporary scholars, NGOs and parents of disabled children are faced with two problems: to prove that inclusion is necessary for children with special educational needs as an alternative to special education and illustrate practical ways of the implementation of inclusive education in the general education process. Evidence of the existence of this type of

education, as a rule, is links to ethical norms, human rights, the right of all children to good education, banning discrimination on any grounds etc. Most experts agree that the legality of such an ambitious project as inclusive education is based primarily on the principles and ideas of social justice (Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughn, Shaw 2000).

Another problem raises real and precise questions: "How does it work?", "How should one make it work?". The answer can be: real changes that should be included into the content of the school education; forms and methods of teaching; training of skilled personnel to work in an inclusive environment; equipment of school facilities with necessary devices. Thus, it should be a new school, namely the school where the children will be involved in three major aspects of school life: the school culture, through which children form a set of human virtues and values; the curriculum, the content of which is prior learning experiences offered to students comprehension; the local community, that is those relations that they want to create (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, Christensen, 2006).

First and foremost, the goal of inclusive education, as noted in the works of Ann Pirie and George Hed, is to educate a completely full member of the society by involving all participants in the education process to the whole-school activities. However, the expression "completely full" regarding children with special needs is quite bizarre. It is clear that a teacher cannot expect a child with impaired locomotion to be a member of the school football team, and should not require the introverted child make a speech to a large audience. The idea is that equality should not be constant, but it must depend on the circumstances where a child appears, on the physical abilities of the child and, most importantly, on the desire of the child to become a participant in an event (Howe, 1996).

As previously noted, despite the fact that special educational institutions performed a segregative function, in the United States they were the only alternative for children with disabilities to receive the education necessary for existence in the adult world until the 1990's. An intermediate stage of social development between segregation and integration was the inclusion of special children in a general education process. In the late 20th century, the terms "integration" and "inclusion" were

synonymous in the scientific studies of American researchers. They were defined as the process of learning different categories of students in a student group. Regardless of the fact that special children were prepared to adapt to the group, the readiness of the community for the adoption of these children was not taken into account. The positive effects of integrated education were undeniable: peers communicated and learnt in a team; despite the slow progress in teaching children with special educational needs, the social competence of all students, according to the testimony of parents, evolved quite effectively; they felt the increase in self-esteem, peers treated them as equal team members and they developed their social skills; watching the children who studied in integrated groups, parents and teachers concluded that physical disabilities do not affect their personal relationships but, on the contrary, healthy children became kinder, more restrained, more caring.

Analysing the typology of concepts "inclusion", "integration" and "segregation" suggested by Ann Pirie and George Hed in 2007 (Howe, 1996), the difference between these concepts is obvious: inclusive study integrates every child into the environment that is ready to accept human differences and when creating the inclusive school it is important to take into consideration differences which are typical for every model of study. There are two models of disability: medical and social. The background of a medical model is an extent of a disease and while providing educational services the emphasis is made on the state of a child's health and its adoption to life in the society with this condition. In the social model, the emphasis is made on the person itself and on its role in the society and, first of all, on keeping to its rights and freedoms.

The main characteristics of the three types of schools

To understand the difference between the three models (special school, school with integrated study, inclusive school) let us make a general characteristic of schools for children with special needs (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of special, inclusive and integrated models of schools for children with special educational needs.

Special school	School with integrated study	Inclusive school
Main aim – educational service	Main aim – taking into consideration needs of the disabled	Main aim – realization of the right for a good education
Medical model of disability as a base of a school program creation	Preserving a medical model of disability during the organization of learning	Setting of a social model of disability
Precise classification of children to schools by the category of disease	Adaptation of a child with special educational needs to study at school	Adaptation of school to work with special children
Providing special conditions of study	Providing equal conditions of study for children with special educational needs	Providing necessary psychological support and assistance for all pupils
Emphasis on the importance of a special environment for disabled children	Emphasis on the individual approach to children with special educational needs	Emphasis on the individual approach to all children
Classification of <i>differences</i>	The ability to manage <i>differences</i>	The recognition of <i>diversity</i> as a valuable component of the society
Focusing on the individual	Focusing on the system	Unification of the system
Emphasis on resources needed for learning	Emphasis on the process of learning	Emphasis on the result of learning
Creation of separate adoptive learning programs	Obligatory implementation of a typical curriculum	Focus on the content of study and creation of an appropriate curriculum
Attracting professionals from different fields to work with children with special needs	Involvement of professionals from inclusive education to work in groups where there are children with special educational needs	Involvement of professionals from inclusive education and parents in partnership, development of relations "parents-inclusive school"
Providing the opportunity to achieve general education for children with special educational needs	Improving the quality of a general education for children with special educational needs	Focusing on school effectiveness and improving the learning conditions

While analysing this comparative characteristics of the three types of schools, it is clear that special and inclusive schools differ extremely in the aims of teaching, approaches to teaching, attitude to the students and intended outcome. Yet it doesn't mean that both of them cannot exist in the educational discourse. The term "child with special educational needs" means that the student, while studying, can have difficulties with some or all school work; difficulties with reading, writing, number work

or understanding information; difficulties in expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying; difficulty in making friends or relating to adults; difficulty in behaving properly in school; difficulty in organising themselves; some kind of sensory or physical need which may affect the learning process. But the main point here is the extent of the physical or mental problem. And if the child cannot fit into the community because of the serious health problems, there should be another option – special education that is specialized and features specially designed instruction to cover the unique learning strengths and needs of students with disabilities. The first aim of special education is to teach the skills and knowledge a child needs to become as independent as possible. Special education programs focus on academic subjects and also include therapy and other related services to help a child overcome difficulties in all areas of development.

As for the school with integrated study, it is slowly being replaced by inclusive schools and in this very case it should be referred as the evolution of both general education and public schools.

Referring to the issue of social justice, the name of Kenneth Howe (University of Colorado) must be mentioned. He stated that children with special educational needs should take part in a school public life together with other members of the group, without hiding their differences and without a feeling of inferiority (handicap). The aim is not to highlight a special compensation in the form of studying at special school until they achieve the level of "normality", but rather to denormalize the way of making regulations and principles and leaving the space for people with differences (Dyson, Howes, Roberts 2002). The way to achieve social justice for people with special educational needs may be in promoting an inclusive education model and its use in comprehensive schools.

Conclusions

Today there are three systems of education available for Ukrainian school children: general education, special education and inclusive edu-

cation which is still being implemented in the secondary schools. In this context, the studies of American and British scientists in the sphere of inclusive education are of great importance for Ukraine due to the lack of access to international educational theories in this field. Such studies would be useful for creating Ukraine's own model of inclusive education which would combine the elements of special education introduced in comprehensive schools.

So, the analysis of the studies made by progressive American and British scholars allows us come to the following conclusions: one of the most important values for a modern citizen is freedom of choice. This means that every person, as well as any child, should have the chance to choose the way of getting education. Specialists in the special educational sphere have created and worked out a large number of forms, methods and teaching techniques for different groups of children with special educational needs. This heritage is valuable and useful in terms of inclusive education as well. Inclusive education cannot be conducted without the participation of professional specialists from different fields of pedagogy, psychology and rehabilitation. As for the families which have children with special educational needs, they should have the right to choose the school for their child, taking into consideration the medical factors and psychological characteristics of the child. The task of administrators, teachers of comprehensive schools and representatives of the departments of education and local government is to provide citizens with the opportunity to obtain a general education which is of high quality.

Taking into account everything previously noted, it is important to underline that the best model of school for Ukraine would be an integrated one which would combine the traditions of both general and special education. The decision as for the distribution children with special educational needs into the general educational environment should be made on the basis of the parents and children's choice as well as on the medical recommendations.

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