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PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS OF MASS SCHOOL TEACHERS FOR WORK WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

Abstract. The article considers the problems of personal preparedness of mass school teachers for work with children with special educational needs as a prerequisite which determines the success of inclusive (integrated) education. Alongside with the cognitive component (represented by a system of meanings), the personal (attitude-based) component has been identified within the structure of teachers' preparedness to implement the main curriculum of general education in a class of pupils with special educational needs. The article defines the notion of "teacher's personal preparedness". In-service training in the field of inclusive education, acquisition of medical, psychological and pedagogical knowledge about people with disabilities should be integrated with the teacher's own reflection of their attitude to the student's special mental or physical features and to the existing differences between people. The article singles out the criteria indicating personal (attitude-based) preparedness. This will enable the teacher to efficiently work towards building adequate relations between the child with special educational needs and their classmates and parents, all of which, as stated in the Federal State Educational Standards, is a compulsory area of psychological and pedagogical support for children with disabilities in the conditions of a general education school.

Keywords: inclusive education; inclusion; personal preparedness of a pedagogue; pedagogues; children with disabilities; disabilities; tolerance.

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Integrated (inclusive) education and upbringing of children with special educational needs and their typically developing peers is the leading tendency of the modern stage of development of special education. At present, there is a conception of inclusive (integrated) learning of disabled children to-

gether with typical ones; variable models of co-education allowing pedagogues to select accessible and useful degree of inclusion for each child have been tested and are implemented in general practice; and various forms of integration of children with disabilities which can be realized at education institutions of

different types have been described (V. Z. Deniskina, O. I. Kukushkina, N. N. Malofeev, I. A. Korobeynikov, N. D. Shmatko, etc.) [14].

The success of co-education is determined, to a large extent, by the competence of the mass school teachers. The necessity of their professional advancement is designated by the *Russian Conception of Integrated Education*; in the *Federal State Educational Standards of General Primary Education (FSES of GPE) for children with disabilities*; in the draft *Adapted Basic General Education Programs of GPE for pupils with disabilities*; in the draft *Special Requirements for Federal State Educational Standards of the basic and secondary general education for children with disabilities in the conditions of inclusive education*. These documents designate psycho-pedagogical knowledge and skills in the field of special pedagogy which the pedagogue should possess in order to be able to solve the problems of children with disabilities, to carry out teaching, upbringing and development taking into account psycho-physical and individual features, including special educational needs of the pupils. We believe it is reasonable to single out one more component of preparedness – the personal (attitude-based) one – in addition to the cognitive component. We will now try to show what we mean under the personal (attitude-based) component.

The relationships of man with the

surrounding world make up an integrative content characteristic of his personality; they present a salient embodiment of the person's significant motives, needs and values and reflect the content of his inner world (A. G. Asmolov, B. S. Bratus', A. N. Leont'ev, D. A. Leont'ev, V. N. Myasishchev, S. L. Rubinshteyn, etc.). Proceeding from the data of methodological preconditions, personal preparedness consists in understanding and enrichment by the pedagogue of his attitude to the people with various disabilities, to those who have special psycho-physical features and are thus different from other people. The following typical features of personal preparedness may be enumerated:

1. The teacher's acknowledgement of urgency of the problem of attitude to persons with disabilities; understanding of the fact that the transformation of special education taking place nowadays and the processes of integration (inclusion) in special education constitute a logical consequence and most important characteristic of the modern (V) period in the evolution of the attitude of the society and the state towards children with special needs (according to the periodization suggested by N. N. Malofeev [12; 13]).

2. The teacher's understanding of his own attitude to persons with disabilities; realization of those characteristics of this attitude which reflect notorious stereotypes, superstitions, motives, needs and values

which are the origins of this attitude; and analysis of the consequences of such character of perception and evaluation of differences between people.

3. Understanding of the fact that the attitude to the person with disability is the reflection of the attitude to those who differ from the majority in a certain way, who are “not like others” (according to N. N. Malofeev) and do not correspond to the norm.

4. The teacher’s readiness to change the established personal meanings as a result of collision with an alternative (but equal, having equal right to exist) point of view on the problem.

The necessity of carrying out purposive activity towards realization of the nature of the teachers’ own attitude to persons with disabilities is substantiated by the socio-cultural approach to the analysis of special education worked out by N. N. Malofeev [12; 13]. He proved that the national systems of special education reflect the evolution of the attitude of the society and the state to persons with disabilities, and that the change of the evolution period brings about the change of the stage of the system of special education. The current transformation of special education is a logical consequence and most important characteristic of the modern (V) period in the evolution of the attitude of the society and the state

towards children with special needs. Integration (inclusion) in special education is natural and brought about by reconsideration of the attitude to persons with disabilities by the society and the state. Transition to the stage of integration (stage 3 in the development of the system of special education) is possible only in case the society demonstrates the attitude typical of stage V. According to N. N. Malofeev, if the society is not ready for accepting a new philosophy of the civil society, and integration is introduced by a forceful political decision it will not have social support. That is why we believe that special importance should be given to the question of how well the personal (value-based meaningful) attitude of a concrete pedagogue working in the conditions of inclusion and the character of his perception and evaluation of differences between people is correlated with the attitude matching the nature of the modern (V) period of evolution, because otherwise the pedagogue will be unable to carry out his professional activity effectively enough.

Furthermore, the pedagogue’s position matters much for the parents and the pupils of the class. According to I. A. Korobeynikov, the attitude of the adults, parents, close people, peers, the peculiarities of their communication and interaction with the child with disabilities play the role of a “non-organic” social

factor forming, along with the factors of organic nature, the character of cognitive activity, personality traits and success of the child's social adaptation [8]. Intellectual disability develops as a violation of the process of socialization indirectly – through the structures of disadaptive types of behavioral response to rejection issuing from the closest environment. Demonstratively negative attitude to the child on the part of the teacher forming a similar attitude to the child on the part of the peers which results in the situation of traumatic isolation of the child refers to the most important external factors likely to lead to quick and rather severe disadaptation of the child [ibid.].

L. M. Putyato comes to the conclusion that in most cases, the teachers give positive characteristics to pupils with high academic standing and seldom see positive aspects of pupils with poor academic achievements. Poor educational performance leads to the negative evaluation of the capabilities, interests and appearance of the pupil. Biased attitude to poor performance pupils is transferred from the academic characteristic to their personality characteristic – the teachers are not aware of the real personality traits of the pupils but “ascribe” certain traits under the influence of stereotypes emerging as a result of their poor academic achievement. Real understanding of the child is

blocked by stereotypical perception in the frames of the main school activity – the academic one [15].

In her study of experience of inclusive education of children with hearing disorder, T. A. Solov'eva writes that the image of such child in a pupil with good hearing is formed under the influence of the surrounding adults. When the teacher has fears about the child with hearing disorder's health and tries to guard him from possible traumas, the typically developing schoolchildren will be more likely to keep a certain distance in their relations with the child with disability [19].

The research by S. V. Alekhina et al. shows the pedagogues' tendency towards a shift in the direction of lower emotional attitude to children with disabilities and the presence of professional “barrier” when the teacher psychologically rejects a child if he is not sure of the child's successful education [1].

The works by the leading researchers of the Russian scientific school of special pedagogy and psychology (E. L. Goncharova, V. Z. Deniskina, I. A. Korobeynikov, O. I. Kukushkina, V. I. Lubovskiy, N. N. Malofeev, N. D. Shmatko, etc.) allowed us to single out the main properties and criteria which may be regarded as parameters of tolerant mentality and behavior in relation to persons with disabilities ensuring the success of integration [18]. These

properties are: a) cognitive complexity, multidimensionality of the personality with disability; b) high degree of understanding of own attitude; c) focusing on the uniting, “joining” properties, demonstration of unity and close relationship of this person with other people; d) overcoming the behavioral perception stereotype typical of everyday trivial mentality and reducing the peculiar features of a person with disabilities to defects and disorders and recognition of the presence of the safe fund, “zones” of success and competence; e) acceptance of the person with disabilities (in the aspect of his motives, aspirations, needs and values).

Thus, the competence of the mass school pedagogues in the work with children with disabilities to a large extent determines the success of co-education. It is important to consider the personal (attitude-based) component along with the cognitive one in the structure of preparedness. Acquisition of knowledge about persons with disabilities should be accomplished in unity with the pedagogue’s understanding of the nature of his own attitude to the person’s peculiar psychological and physical features. The personal component largely ensures effectiveness of formation by the pedagogues of adequate relationships between the child with special educational needs and his classmates and parents, which is an

obligatory area of psycho-pedagogical support for the child with disability in the conditions of a general education class.

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