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FORMATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH TRAINING WORKSHOPS WITH PARENTS

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Abstract

Inclusive education as education 'for everyone' implies accessibility, adaptation of the educational system as a whole and each educational institution to a variety of features and specificity of the educational needs of every child, including children with special needs. The effectiveness of inclusive education and psychological comfort of all participants in an educational space depends on co-readiness for inclusive education. The relevance and usefulness of using training workshops as a form of work with students' parents is confirmed by functionality and characteristics of this way of work.

The article provides an analysis of results of testing a technology of training workshops with primary school pupils' parents in the formation of inclusive educational environment. The purpose of the study was to identify the impact of the usage of training workshops in working with parents. During experimentation a set of thematic trainings is approbated, conditions of inclusive culture of parents are revealed; directions of qualitative renewal of the system of teachers and parents interaction are set. The experiment took place in Russia and Belarus. A total of 237 people took part in the experiment.

The results of experimental studies confirmed the hypothesis and the effectiveness of training in cooperation with their parents for the formation of an inclusive educational environment.

1. Introduction

1.1. Relevance of the issue

An important characteristic of inclusive education is its poly-subjectivity. It defines a broad variety of educational environment as a field of development and socialization of both ordinary and children with special need. Each subject (person) of an educational environment has own experience, positions, mindsets and interests, interprets and accepts social and educational values in his/her own way, and formulates a social request. Parents and a parental position are a powerful factor that can affect both effectiveness of inclusive education and psychological comfort of all participants in educational environment (Khitryuk, 2016). A group of parents is heterogeneous and not always harmonious in the inclusive educational environment. 'Inharmoniousness manifests itself in mismatch of parents' positions, requests, requirements for concerning differences in teacher's attention distribution needs and educational results for both ordinary children and children with developmental problems' (Khitryuk, 2015). Work success is determined by coordinated interaction of a teacher and parents of both ordinary and children with special needs. Also, interaction success between a teacher and parents largely depends on teacher's ability to unite a family and a school in solving problems of education, upbringing, socialization based on common values. Firstly, a nature of this interaction is determined by personal, social and professional positions of each participant. Secondly, it is noted that a teacher is supposed to be thoughtful in organization work with parents. It requires constant updating of teacher-parents work content, creating new inclusive space. Therefore, this problem is important and essential.

1.2. Analysis of the problem

Study of an inclusive education problem in its historical and content-related aspects allows to single out a number of fundamental questions. These are the problems of inclusive education in the context of a system approach (Aristova, 2015), education of schoolchildren and students (Akhmetzyanova, 2014; Parfilova, Karimova, & Kasimova, 2015; Biktagirova, & Korotkova, 2016), study of parents' attitude towards inclusive education (Gliga, & Popa, 2010, Biktagirova, & Kasimova, 2015, Biktagirova, & Khitryuk, 2016), questions related to the need for psychological, pedagogical and social support not only of a disabled child, but of a whole family (Resch et al., 2010).

These studies reveal understanding of inclusive education as a system. They investigate questions of inclusive education peculiarities, parental community's heterogeneity. A half of ordinary children's parents opposes co-education of their child in the same class with children with special needs. Parents of children with disabilities are more in favor of inclusive education.

The effectiveness of the parents' acceptance of inclusive education is determined by an adequate choice of forms and technologies for the assigned tasks. It is also important for teachers to have a variety of techniques and methods of work with parents that are relevant to work content and planned results. Training workshop is one of these new forms of work with parents. Training workshop in psychological and pedagogical theory and practice 'is interpreted as a kind of educational method where practicing is a leading activity. It is a way of personal development; a way of reprogramming person's behavior and activities control models. It is a process of creating new functional control behavior entities; complex of intensive methods of transforming influence on personality. It represents practice of psychological, social

and pedagogical influence on individuals and groups; it is a form of training which purpose is to develop the competence of interpersonal and professional conduct and communication' (Kashlev, 2000; Levina, 2001; Selevko, 2006).

Relevancy and expediency of using training workshops while working with students' parents is confirmed by the functional capabilities and characteristics of this work form itself. Analysis of psychological and educational literature showed that such trainings in general can perform diagnostic-corrective, educational, communicative, reflexive, command-forming functions. Among the main training peculiarities researchers point out the following: substantive and organizational interactivity; diagnosticity and communicativeness (Selevko, 2006).

Thus, training workshop is being characterized by several functions. They are: interactivity and subjectivity (reflected in the form of participants' active intellectual, operative, practical reactions and new behavioral patterns revision); communicative and dialogic nature (manifested in a non-evaluative discussion of content and ways of solving problems based on cooperation); target orientation (aimed at developing content of a trainings workshop in accordance with participants' personal and social needs); emotional saturation (relates to a process of getting and realizing participants' positive mindsets, with a foundation of interlocutor's positive qualities and his merits recognition). Reflectivity (focuses the participants' attention on own personalities, on the ideas about themselves, positions, thoughts, habitual ways of behavior, self-analysis of their activity). Processibility (revealed in consistency, manageability, effectuality and reproducibility).

Above mentioned training's functions, peculiarities and characteristics are valid to a goal and content of teacher's work with parents, which makes it rational to study this form of work as a way of solving problems of forming an inclusive educational environment.

1.3. Methodological basis

Methodological basis of the study was found upon the following approaches: competence-based, contextual and axiological.

A) Competence-based approach. This approach is aimed at developing the willingness and ability to solve problems self-sufficiently, using social and one's own experience. This approach implies 'creation of conditions for formation experience of taking independent solution while solving cognitive, communicative, organizational, moral and other problems. These problems underpin the content of education. The assessment of key competencies is based on an analysis of levels of their development' (Selevko, 2006; Lisovskaya, 2016)

B) The Contextual approach. It is realized with the help of 'a system of new and traditional forms and methods that involve modeling subject and social content of inclusive education' conditions' (Verbitsky, 2010).

C) The axiological approach. 'Provides links between a system of knowledge, skills and values, which are aimed not only at meeting needs of individual people, but also at meeting challenges of society humanization' (Slastenin, 2000).

2. Problem Statement

Nowadays the following contradictions are obvious and require resolution in modern educational environment:

- contradiction between social demand for the development and implementation of inclusive education at schools and immature parents' tolerance to all children studying together;

- contradiction between necessity of professional team work of a teacher, an educational-psychologist, a social pedagogue and parents as full members of inclusive educational environment and their insufficient preparedness for such work;

- contradiction between variety of forms and methods of work with parents in pedagogical theory and lack of their usage, including training workshops;

- contradiction between the opportunity of using training workshops as a method of work with parents and the lack of their scientific, methodological and didactic support.

3. Research Questions

The necessity to resolve the abovementioned contradictions has determined the problem of the research: how can we use a training workshop for the effective work with parents of students? What should the content of training workshops for parents include in the context of inclusive education?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to identify the effectiveness of using training workshops with students' parents in primary schools for inclusive educational environment creation.

Hypothesis: the effectiveness of training workshops while working with parents in the context of an inclusive educational environment formation will be ensured if:

- there is conducted a preventive training for general secondary education institutions teachers to develop training workshops and use them while working with parents;

- a systematic work with parents is being carried out with the usage of training workshops;

- training workshops contribute to parents' knowledge and competence development, their tolerant attitude and respect for the diversity of individuality formation; social stereotypes identification and confrontation those stereotypes.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Theoretical and empirical methods

The reliability of the study findings is provided by using a set of the following methods that are adequate for the purpose of the study:

A) theoretical (interdisciplinary analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature);

B) empirical (questionnaires, sociometrics, pedagogical (formative) experiment);

B) data processing methods (quantitative and qualitative analysis), statistical data analyses.

5.2. Organization of the experiment. Research basis

Experiment was carried out at schools of the Republic of Belarus (in the following cities: Baranovichi, Brest, Gomel, Zhlobin) and the Russian Federation (Kazan and the Republic of Tatarstan). 237 people - parents of primary school students of general secondary education (experimental group) took part in the experiment.

5.3. Stages of research

The study included 3 stages.

The first stage included an initial analysis of the described above problem. To assess the experiment results the following methods were used: questionnaire for students' parents and sociometrics in children's classes. The questionnaire allowed to do the following: determine respondents' knowledge about inclusive education, and their attitude towards ideas and values of inclusive education, as well as nature of social, professional and educational inquiries. It helped to identify parent's ideas about goals and objectives of education, projected difficulties in a teaching process in the context of inclusive education, children's educational needs, the preference while choosing the type of educational institution, the expected outcome of a child's schooling, the attitude towards co-education of all kids together and so on.

At the second stage, the following training workshops for parents were developed and conducted: 'Different children are different people ...', 'Stereotypes and discrimination in society and education', 'Inclusive education: main ideas and advantages', 'Children friendship', 'Inclusive education: what parents can do', 'Inclusive excursion: learning a city (universe, school, etc.) together', 'Inclusive education: talents of each child', 'Inclusive education: I talk to a child'. The content of the developed trainings for parents made it possible to consistently penetrate into the value-semantic aspect of social inclusion. The trainings showed the advantages of co-education of all children and determined the parents' role in creation comfortable psychological and pedagogical conditions for them.

Work with parents on formation of inclusive educational environment includes the main components: support of parents of children with problems, awareness-rising work with ordinary children's parents, preparing them for co-education of all children together and work with all class parents on the basis of partnerships. It should be taken into consideration that partnerships establishment is a sequential prolonged process. This process goes throw a number of stages:

- an initial phase contains the simplest contacts for information exchange (an important point is mutual expectations confirmation: for example, parents of both groups of children and a teacher consider it is important to create conditions for children communication and interaction in a class, and the first step is to get to know each other);

- a phase of cooperation includes certain educational problems solution by joint efforts (for example, assistance to the teacher in preparation or selection of training aids and didactic materials taking into account the educational needs of all children in a class);

- a phase of effective co-operation is mutual understanding and interaction of all parties in achieving a common goal (for example, organizing excursion for all children in a class and their parents).

While organizing work with parents in a training format, the teacher sets a series of tasks: establishing partnerships; uniting all parents efforts for development, training, education, socialization of

all children in a class; creating a fellow-feelings atmosphere; activation and enrichment of parents' educational skills, maintaining their confidence in their own pedagogical capabilities; parents' personal and social development, foster their skills of social activity and constructive behavior.

At the third stage, a control section of the study results was produced.

5.4. Results

There are both opponents and adherents of an inclusive education. Unfortunately, there were more opponents among parents at the first stage. Parents had changed their attitude towards co-education after training workshops in conditions of inclusive education participation (Table 1) and attitude towards rights of a child with psychological and physiological peculiarities to have a chance for co-education (Table 2).

Table 01. Attitude to co-education

Statements	Answers, %							
	Yes		Rather yes, than no		Rather no, than yes		No	
	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment
Co-education of my kid and a kid with special educational needs will inhibit the learning process of both	24,4	8,9	23,3	16,5	25,6	35,8	25,6	37,3
Co-education of my kid and a kid with special educational needs will hinder the development of my child	14,4	6	19,9	20,9	35,6	31,3	28,9	41,8
Co-education of my child and a "special" child will promote the development of respect of every person	37,8	56,7	42,2	29,8	14,4	7,5	5,6	4,5
Co-education will develop an ability to communicate and interact in later life	43,3	59,7	31,1	29,8	22,2	7,5	3,3	3

Table 02. Attitude toward rights of children with psychological and physiological peculiarities to have a chance for co-education

Statements	Answers, %							
	Yes		Rather yes, than no		Rather no, than yes		No	
	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment
Children with peculiarities in their psychophysical development are more likely to receive education	54,4	32,8	26,7	19,4	12,2	28,4	6,7	16,3

in special educational institutions								
All children, regardless of their characteristics, should study together, attend the same educational institutions	12,2	37,4	21,1	26,8	45,6	26,8	21,1	6,0

These trainings allowed parents to see the advantages of inclusive education (Table 3). At the same time, parents came up to the conclusion that children co-education would develop an ability to communicate and interact in future life (amount of parents chosen an answer 'yes' had increased from 43.3% to 59.7%) and contribute to the development of respect of each person within the discussion. The amount of the parents, answered yes for the question about seeing benefits for their children involvement in inclusive education had increased from 13,2% on the ascertaining stage to 37,1% after the experiment.

Table 03. Discussion of inclusive education benefits

Statements	Answers, %							
	Yes		Rather yes, than no		Rather no, than yes		No	
	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment
Inclusive education opens the door before the kids with peculiarities and blocks the other kids' development	10,7	5,8	26,9	6,5	25,5	36,1	36,2	47,7
I see benefits of inclusive education for my child	16,2	37,1	22,7	32,5	34	17,9	26	6,9
I am convinced the inclusive education will bring disadvantages to my child	13,1	2,4	20,6	5,6	26,9	30,1	37,7	54,2

Particularly pleasing was the fact that there were some changes in the parents' need to expand knowledge about inclusive education (Table 4) and a fairly fundamental change in the parents' awareness about their attitude to it (Table 5). At the same time they not only demonstrated positive attitude to co-education, but also were making an efforts to teach their child to tactfully treat peers - 86.6% answered yes and 11.9% rather yes, than no.

Table 04. Intention to expand experience and knowledge about inclusive education

Statements	Answers, %							
	Yes		Rather yes, than no		Rather no, than yes		No	
	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment
I will encourage my child to be educated in a classroom with a "special" child	15,6	23,8	25,6	38,8	34,4	22,4	24,4	13,5
I want to learn and use the experience of upbringing various children, including "special"	16,7	32,8	22,2	44,8	29,9	11,9	31,1	7,5
I'm going to learn more about inclusive education: it is important for the development of me and my child	26,7	34,4	26,7	35,8	19,9	17,9	24,4	8,9

Table 05. Position consciousness and activity changes

Statements	Answers, %							
	Yes		Rather yes, than no		Rather no, than yes		No	
	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment	Ascertain experiment	Control experiment
I am going to help a teacher to build a friendly relationship between all children in a class	42,2	46,3	41,1	32,8	11,1	10,4	4,4	7,5
I am going to encourage my child to make friends among "special" children: this is a reliable way to bring up a person	39,9	47,7	39,9	31,4	13,3	11,9	5,6	6,0
I am going to actively participate in promoting the ideas of inclusive	16,7	25,4	19,9	35,9	35,6	26,8	24,4	8,9

education which is very important.							
I want to teach my child to communicate with any child, regardless of his/her peculiarities	53,3	61,2	28,9	28,3	13,3	6,0	4,4	3,0
I will try to teach my child to communicate with peers tactfully	79,9	86,6	18,9	11,9	1,1	0	0	1,5

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify the presence and correlation strength between the diagnostic methods' scales of readiness for inclusive education of parents. It helps to estimate the strength of a linear relationship between variables. The definition of correlation relationships is a direct evidence of the emergence of inclusive parenting readiness in our study.

The sociometrics results also testify to the changes in the relationships between children (the number of children with special characteristics of psychophysical development increased in the dyad of friendly relations, and their status among peers increased). .

6. Findings

Training workshops for parents in substantive and organizational aspects had a significant impact on the development of all components of their parental competence (cognitive, value-semantic, emotional, conative): parents' awareness of the main aspects, values, principles of inclusive education, about capabilities of children with special educational needs, including kids with psycho-physical developmental peculiarities. Training revealed social stereotypes in relation to people with peculiarities of their psychophysical development in the social community and educational institutions, also trainings allowed to develop an ability to resist social stereotypes and to find a way to challenge it. The parents' readiness to accept and work at the conditions for cooperation between all children of the class. Parents became more active taking part in organization of classroom and even school-wide events. They were ready to 'tell their child about the people's equality and to take an active part in co-educational activities'.

The research results show that an "appropriation" process of values and meanings of professional and pedagogical activity in the context of inclusive education is based on the initial teachers' readiness. It develops throw obvious or latent resistance to passive and then to active acceptance

7. Conclusion

Thus, the obtained research results confirm the hypothesis on the dependence of training workshops effectiveness while working with parents in the context of an inclusive educational environment formation

on some factors: 1) quality of preventive teachers' preparation for trainings development and its usage in work with parents; 2) consistency of training workshops for parents; 3) correct training content selection.

The teachers' professional competence (value-semantic, cognitive, methodical) improved. They mastered a method of training workshop as a technique of work with parents and acquired some skills of including parents as full-fledged subjects of the educational process. Also, the teachers mastered their skills of working in a team and making decisions. They trained their ability to listen to the opinion of each participant, to engage a self- reflection of their actions, to feel the other people's mood. Teachers got an opportunity to develop their knowledge about the nature of inclusive education, about the forms of discrimination in education, also they learnt some methods of confrontation and struggling against it. Teachers acquired some knowledge about the abilities and capabilities of children and people with disabilities and about the ways of organizing conditions for communication of all children in a classroom, about the training workshops main ideas and methodology.

Acknowledgments

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