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THE MAIN PROBLEM AREAS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE USA

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Abstract

The urgency of the research is stipulated by the importance of the problem of education of alternative schoolchildren. Having education by this category of citizens is one of the essential requirements of their successful socialization, comprehensive participation in social life, effective self-realization in different fields of professional and social life. Inclusive education involves the integration of alternative children into mainstream education, eliminates any discrimination against them and creates conditions for the education of children with special educational needs. This practice actualizes a number of new problems caused by the joint stay in the same educational space of the alternative and traditional children. The main of them is the ability not only to coexist tolerantly but to learn productive intercultural cooperation, which will be equally useful for the representatives of both cultural groups – alternative and traditional - in terms of the development of the child's subjective principles, his socialization and education of human qualities of personality. The choice of a multicultural context of the problem is not accidental. It expands significantly the content of the concept of "tolerance" - from simple tolerance to the interest in another, acceptance, respect and approval of cultural differences, positive perception of another culture, dialogue with another, recognition of the value of cultural diversity. The results of the research can serve as a guide for working out ways of including all the members of school staff and a child's family in the process of education of alternative schoolchildren.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays the world science and practice pay more and more attention to the problems of people with alternative development. Today in Russia there is a need to reform the educational environment of the educational institution in order to accept and teach alternative children, which requires serious theoretical and practical efforts of different specialists, as well as the study and analysis of foreign experience in order to adapt its valuable elements to the Russian socio-cultural conditions for the modernization of the education system in Russia. In modern conditions inclusive education is recognized as the leading promising form of education for children with alternative development in the American school, as such organization of the educational process allows you to satisfy the educational needs of each special child (Bessarabova & Kurysheva, 2020; Golikov, 2009; Golovchits, 2010).

Modern researchers note that today in the world the United States is among the countries with the most perfect legislation in relation to the studied problem (Alekhina, 2011; Dmitriev, 2011). In this regard, we consider it appropriate to refer to the pedagogical experience of the United States, where rich theoretical and practical material has been accumulating for several decades. The choice of the pedagogical experience of the United States is due to the fact that this country is a pioneer in the field of multicultural education, which stimulated the reform of the education system in the country to provide equal rights and opportunities to receive quality educational services to all citizens regardless of identity. The study of the pedagogical experience of the United States is relevant for Russia in the context of the integration of domestic education into the world educational process in order to identify the most valuable ideas of foreign scientists in solving the complex task of preparing young people for life in a multicultural society.

We emphasize that the multicultural context also expands the content of the concept of “alternativeness”. According to the theory of multicultural education, the alternativeness of the child manifests itself in any form of difference from the bulk of children, which can lead to exclusion from the majority.

2. Problem Statement

Thus, it is important to reveal the problem areas of inclusive education in the USA in the context of multicultural education policy; to study the leading American theories that define the content of the basic concept of this study – “a child with alternative development”. In this regard, the research problem is to identify the features of the process of inclusive education in a modern comprehensive American school in the context of multicultural education policy.

3. Research Questions

Before proceeding to the analysis of the problem areas that require close attention of the specialists and the family in the organization of the process of education and upbringing of children with developmental disabilities, we turn to the content of the basic concept of this study – “a child with alternative development” – in the American scientific literature. It should be emphasized that in this study we consider the problem of teaching alternative children in the context of multicultural education, not

correctional pedagogy. These areas are very similar in relation to the problem studied, but they place different emphasis on the classification of this category of children, and therefore each area has its own specific problems in the education and upbringing of children.

It should be noted that in the world science and practice there are two approaches to determining the social essence of disability: medical and social. According to *the medical approach*, the understanding of disability is based on the recognition of the fact that people have any health or functional limitations. This approach forms attitude towards disabled people as sick people, so when taking measures to improve their situation, the emphasis is placed on medical rehabilitation measures. *The social approach* focuses not on human defects, but on those social limitations that prevent a person from fully realizing his capabilities. From this point of view, disability is seen as the result of physical, informational and other barriers. This position makes it possible to consider the rights of a disabled person through the prism of human rights and to improve the normative consolidation of such guarantees, which allow ensuring the de facto equality of persons with disabilities with people without disabilities. Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, describing disability as an evolutionary concept, considers it as the result of interaction between people with health disorders and barriers created by the environment and society (Menlove, 2014). According to Minow (2018), the concept of “other” in itself is not inherent in a person. The differences become apparent only when compared to someone who is considered “normal”. After differences are fixed by legal norms, there is a corresponding differentiation in social relations (Minow, 2018).

In our opinion, multicultural education is closely related to the issues of correctional pedagogy, but there is a significant difference between these areas in relation to working with alternative children. Correctional pedagogy relies more on the medical approach in characterizing the child's development. Multicultural education draws attention to the problem of socialization of children, considering issues of tolerance and respect for these children by adults and peers. In this case, the main task of the school is to create such learning conditions that the child has a sense of belonging or inclusion in the peer group. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on the acceptance and respect for differences as inherent traits of the personality of the child, not the obstacles in his learning. It should be emphasized that the terminology used to characterize children with alternative development is a very problematic issue. Analysis of relevant sources has shown that there is no unambiguous definition of this category of children. Moreover, many terms indicate, first of all, the inferiority of the child, which can cause pain and suffering, both to the child and his parents.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to identify the main problem areas of teaching children with alternative development in the United States.

5. Research Methods

The fundamental theoretical works of the American scientists on the issues of inclusive education and multicultural education have served as the main sources of the problem. In the process of the research

the authors used methods of theoretical analysis of scientific literature on this problem, translation, synthesis of scientific foreign works to identify the main provisions of this study.

6. Findings

We present the results of the analysis of the most commonly used terms of this field of study in the American scientific literature. It should be emphasized that it is not possible to characterize all existing concepts in the framework of this study, since different groups of alternatives are noted, which, in turn, are divided into subgroups, etc. Moreover, supporters of multicultural education reveal a different reading of a term in comparison with the generally accepted characteristics.

In general, the term “disability” refers to the obvious characteristics (physical or mental) of a person. It denotes the loss or loss of function of a particular part of the body or organ. A disabled child cannot perform certain tasks (for example, walk, talk, see) in the same way as a child with traditional development (Bigge, 2018). American researchers unanimously emphasize that the disability of the child is not an obstacle to the development of his personality with the correct organization of training, the presence of competent professional teachers and a specially organized learning environment. For example, as Bruner (2002) points out, a child with one arm or leg who cannot lead a normal life outside of school (play certain games with peers who have traditional development) is not considered disabled in a school where a barrier-free environment adapted to his physical characteristics is created.

The International Classification of Functioning (ICF) defines “disability” as the result of the interaction between a person who has any disorder (or feature) of health and external barriers (environmental conditions, the attitude of surrounding people) faced by a person (Bull, 2016).

Therefore, according to this approach to the definition of the term “disability”, we can draw the following conclusion. A child who moves in a wheelchair cannot attend the school where there is no barrier-free environment, so we can say that this child has a “disability”. Proponents of multicultural education associate this term not with the child, but with the environment, calling it unsuitable for the needs of the child (Salend, 2017). Therefore, according to the multicultural scientists, this child has only a violation of health, but not the disability. He may be called “a child with a physical impairment”, but not “a child with disability” or “a disabled child”.

Here is another example. A visually impaired child, who is provided at school and home with educational materials printed in Braille (reading and writing system for the blind), constant help from teachers and parents, friendly attitude of peers, is not considered a disabled child since he does not meet external barriers to education (Mastfopieri, 2014).

Analysis of the works of American scientists showed that there is disagreement among teachers and scholars about the use of the terms in relation to this category of children – “impairment”, “disability”, “handicap”. There is an opinion among scientists that impairment can cause disability, which in turn will lead to handicap. The handicap will contribute to further social isolation of a child. The more complete the isolation, the less aware society becomes of the needs of such a child and of the barriers that prevent him from fully communicating with other members of the society (Beirne-Smith, 2018).

The World Health Organization defines “impairment”, “disability” and “handicap” as follows (Zaitsev, 2014). *Impairment* is associated with a temporary or permanent loss of any function of the body

(physiological or psychological); it is damage affecting the mental (memory, consciousness) or sensory abilities, as well as the activities of internal and external organs. *Disability* is related to limitations in the performance of an activity resulting from the impairment. *Handicap* is the result of impairment or disability that prevents the performance of any activity that is normal for a given age, sex, social and cultural background (Zaitsev, 2014).

It should be emphasized that the above terms are still found in documents and scientific literature of the United States, with the exception of the term “handicap”, which is associated with discrimination against this category of citizens. Proponents of multicultural education suggest using the term “difabled” or “differently-abled” (i.e. “capable in another”) instead of the term “disabled” (Gollnick, 2010). The terms “alternative child” or “exclusive child” (“exceptional child”) are also common, which are synonymous to the “difabled child”. Scientists explain the content of these concepts as follows: if a child cannot perform any action in the traditional way, there is always an alternative way to perform it. Exceptional children are children who perform an activity in the ways different from conventional norms (excluding traditional norms) (Ibid.). It should be emphasized that the term “invalid” is unacceptable in the United States in relation to people with disabilities, as this approach humiliates a person and emphasizes his inability to feel like a full member of the society (Menlove, 2014).

Making a preliminary conclusion about the use of terminology to categorize alternative children in the United States, we highlight the following points. The American scientific literature contains a more lenient terminology to characterize the features in the development of children. The leading terms are “alternative child” or “child capable in another” (“difabled child”). This choice occurred under the influence of multicultural education, which sees in any child, first of all, the personality, and then his cultural, physical and mental characteristics. Regarding approaches to the definition of the social essence of disability, a social approach dominates in the United States, focusing not on human defects, but social barriers.

The results of the research showed that *the main problem areas* of education of alternative schoolchildren in the USA include: complex terminology which is used concerning a child with alternative development, which is insufficient to characterize the educational status of a person; outside and individual barriers in education; the necessity of multicultural training of a future teacher; the partnership of school and family.

Let us turn to the main problems of teaching alternative children, which are identified in the process of analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature of the United States. It is important to understand that every child faces learning challenges, regardless of whether or not he has a physical or mental impairment. Problems or barriers in learning interfere with the full social, emotional and physical development of the child. They can be permanent or temporary, depending on the timely adoption of the necessary measures to eliminate them.

The analysis of the American scientific literature revealed two main types of barriers to children with disabilities – external (or environmental barriers) and individual ones, which together generate a series of barriers that require serious joint work of the school, parents and society to eliminate them.

External barriers include the following ones: limited or closed access of the child to early correctional programs (intervention programs) or support programs; cultural discrimination by teachers,

school administrators, peers; teaching methods and teaching materials that do not meet the special educational needs of the children; a system for assessing children's performance based on common standards rather than individual capabilities; no barrier-free school environment (Johnsen, 2017).

Individual barriers include the following ones: communication (this barrier applies to non-English speaking children and children with visual and hearing impairments); the feeling of insecurity, low self-esteem and self-doubt of the child; problems of socialization of the child; belonging to a national, linguistic or religious minority (the alternative child in this case is more difficult to adapt to the new school environment); individual health problems of a child (Johnsen, 2017).

Scientists emphasize unanimously that teachers and parents cannot eliminate all of the above barriers and change the socio-economic conditions in which the child lives. But the very understanding of the negative impact of these barriers on the social, physical and emotional development of the child is the first step towards overcoming these problems. The list of the above barriers can serve as a criterion for determining the causes of the child's failure.

According to the researchers, many of the negative effects of a child's health impairments can be reduced if the child has the following capabilities: the child interacts constantly with peers and adults at school and home; if a barrier-free environment is created in the territory of his residence and study; there is a close contact between the school and the family (Dorries, 2017). So, after multicultural education becomes the leading direction in the educational policy of the United States, its main goal is to obtain quality education for all citizens regardless of their identity, and the main task is to eliminate all forms of discrimination in educational institutions and society.

7. Conclusion

American concepts of inclusive education are united by the idea that creating an inclusive educational environment affects not only the reform of the educational system but also the rethinking of the philosophy of education based on the ideas of freedom, justice and equality. A distinctive feature of the American concepts of inclusive education is the emphasis on raising an alternative child not as the object of lifelong care of the family, but as the most independent and active subject, able to make independent decisions in his life. Thus, the following main problem areas in the organization of the learning process of children with alternative development are identified:

- the variety of terminology denoting a child with developmental impairments [(sparing concepts such as “alternative child”, “exceptional child”, “child capable in another” (“difabled child”)] are used in the USA since the social approach to determining the capabilities of the child dominates;
- external and individual barriers to learning, including the inability of the environment to the special physical and educational needs of the child, unprofessionalism of teachers and school administration, the discrepancy of software and methodological support to the educational opportunities of the child, as well as individual characteristics of the child and the inability of family participation in the education and upbringing of the child;
- cooperation between school and family, which means constant, continuous contact between parents, teachers and the child in the learning process;

- the need for multicultural training of future teachers, implying the preparation of culturally competent specialist, able to work with multicultural composition of children.

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