The Impact of Inclusive Education on Society

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the impact of inclusive education on society. It discusses about solving problems associated with disability as one of the priority tasks of social policy of modern states. Operating in almost all areas of life, public opinion simultaneously has its boundaries determined by the social significance of the processes, events, and phenomena under discussion. The formation of public opinion is greatly influenced by the existing socio-political system, the economic situation, the media, the level of education, culture of the population, and a number of other factors. These factors are discussed in the article furthermore.

KEYWORDS: inclusive education, impact on society, disability, public opinion, social significance, socio-political system, real challenge, special classes, special schools.

Inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools is a challenge for the traditional (and rather problematic) practice of placing students in special classes and special schools within the special education system. Inclusive education (IE) is a controversial reform of international significance. And although the introduction of IE is a difficult and controversial practice, it is also certain that this educational reform is indispensable. This is an education reform for students with disabilities, which is "clearly defined as the main development strategy of the UNESCO International Educational Programme "Education for All"".

Inclusion differs significantly from the special education system, which is based on teaching in isolated educational settings on a full or partial basis. The Action Plan adopted in Salamanca in 1994 describes the main characteristics of an inclusive school: The fundamental principle of an inclusive school is that all children should, whenever possible, learn together, regardless of their differences and the difficulties they experience. Inclusive schools must identify and respond to the diverse needs of students, accommodate different learning styles and paces, and provide quality education for each student through specific curricula, organizational measures, teaching strategies, use of resources and partnerships.

Continuous assistance and services aimed at meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the schools where they are educated are necessary. In general, IE focuses on two aspects of student development: academic (cognitive) and social (affective, emotional). Most teachers in special and inclusive schools focus on the development of the cognitive curriculum in order to support academic achievement. In turn, the social development of students with disabilities is given much less attention. It can be argued that schools and special education classrooms perceive the social curriculum

as less important than the academic curriculum, which is related to the practice of isolating children with disabilities from other peers in special education. However, at least in theory, inclusive education is based on social interactions between different students. Until now, there has been relatively little information on the comparative impact of special and inclusive educational contexts on the social relationships between children with disabilities and other students. However, in the study of social relationships between these two groups, assessing emotional development seems to be a difficult task using traditional, standard assessment tools. Moreover, it is obvious that inclusion can be used almost anywhere and is an evolutionary stage of social development. Only a few institutions have reached the level necessary for conducting comparative studies focusing on topics such as the formation of social attitudes.

There is currently no consensus on which system is more successful in ensuring that children with disabilities are adequately accepted by their peers. Inclusionists believe that it is the right of all students to be educated with their nondisabled peers and that inclusion will lead to enhanced social and academic development, stronger citizenship, and a stronger society. Special education is criticized for hindering the acceptance of children with disabilities by their peers. Supporters of special education, who believe that access to specialized settings is essential, reject such arguments and see special education as the most effective academic and social approach. The picture remains unclear. One of the problematic aspects of educating and placing students with disabilities in schools is how they develop friendships with their peers. Supporters of inclusion believe that students with disabilities and other students will develop friendships if they are educated together and therefore have opportunities to interact. J. E. Downing and J. Eichinger, referring to Bishop and Jabal, say that for any student, especially a disabled student, one of the most important results of the learning process is making friends. M. Forest and E. Lasthouse share this opinion. They believe that friendship has a variety of positive effects: "Children's cognitive and social development is enhanced if they have a sense of belonging, relationships with others, especially friends."

From this brief review, it is clear that there are polar opposite opinions in the literature regarding the impact (positive or negative) of general education on friendships. The picture is complicated by the fact that inclusion is a relatively new approach. Much of the available literature talks about the integration effect being characteristic of special education, but not of inclusive education. Many researchers miss this point. This article addresses the following questions: – Are there differences between special and inclusive schools in terms of the development of friendships between disabled people and their peers? – What

is the attitude of peers towards disabled people in the school setting? – Do students stand up for their disabled peers when the latter are being bullied? The article compared students' attitudes towards their disabled peers. The basis for the comparison was the type of school (special or inclusive) where the children studied. Volunteer students from both types of schools were interviewed to find out whether the students were friends with disabled peers, what kind of relationships existed with disabled people, how other students behaved towards disabled people, whether students stood up for disabled peers if they behaved inappropriately towards them, and whether students approved of the approach to educating disabled people that was typical in their schools.

Currently, solving problems related to disability is one of the priority tasks of social policy of modern states. States strives to ensure that every person with disabilities can exercise their rights and freedoms equally with other members of society. But despite this, people with disabilities are seriously influenced by the media, scientific and public discourses and public opinion in general in the process of social adaptation. This is due to the fact that public opinion is the most important component of the life of society, having the force of an unwritten law, an expression of the public collective conscience. Acting in almost all areas of life, public opinion at the same time has its boundaries determined by the social significance of the processes, events, and phenomena under discussion. The formation of public opinion is greatly influenced by the existing socio-political system, the economic situation, the media, the level of education, culture of the population and a number of other factors. The consequence of this is the lack of awareness of the population on the issue of disability as a social problem. In this regard, there is often a distortion of ideas about the needs of people with disabilities and their personal characteristics. This gives rise to prejudices and phobias that strengthen the communication barrier between representatives of this category of the population and the rest of society [1].

In turn, people with disabilities, for one reason or another, continue to distance themselves from society. The barrier that was laid many years ago has now given rise to a large number of other insurmountable barriers: from physical to psychological. Data from a number of studies indicate a persistent stereotype of people with disabilities in society, which, unfortunately, is not optimistic. The negative stereotype is expressed in the idea of people with disabilities as wretched, unhappy, with the most limited abilities.

The world-famous E. Kepler noted that the most difficult thing is not blindness, but the attitude of the sighted to the blind. The deaf-blind writer Helen Keller wrote: "The blind are cut off from objects, the deaf - from people." According to the sociologist E.R.Yarskaya-Smirnova, it is not natural data, but society that discriminates against the disabled and their families, depriving them of social rights, reproducing inequality and social stratification [2]. Research into the life difficulties of disabled people and the opinions of healthy people about them will allow changing the attitude of society towards this category of the population and applying innovative technologies of medical and social work with people with limited health capabilities. An important role in

this is played by the development of inclusive education, which, in essence, involves the inclusion of children with any limitations in the life of society, their social integration.

Like inclusive education, social work is based on humanistic principles, such as:

➢ the value of a person does not depend on his abilities and achievements;

➢ each person has the ability to think and feel;

➢ each person has the right to communicate and the right to be heard;

➢ each person needs to communicate with another person;

➢ each person needs a friend and support;

➢ education is carried out in the context of relationships;

➢ diversity brings strength to a person's life;

➢ progress in learning is what a person has learned, not what he cannot do [2].

These principles are the foundation of inclusive education, and are directly related to the implementation of social work. We believe that understanding and accepting these simple, but very important principles by each person contributes to raising the culture of society as a whole, that is, everyone changes their attitude towards people "not like him". The level of socialization also grows - this is one of the main results of the activities of the proposed positions.

We can conclude that inclusion solves not only the problem of accessibility of education for disabled children, it also involves solving many other equally important problems. One of them is the socialization and integration of people with disabilities into society. The attitude towards them determines the level of culture and social development. Indifference and cruelty towards them lead to the spiritual degradation of the entire society. The development of inclusive education has greatly improved the lives of people with disabilities, but there are still many difficulties, for example, from the media and public opinion.

But in general, the position of people with disabilities in society is satisfactory, and the attitude towards them is benevolent. There has been a positive dynamic in the relationship "healthy person - disabled person". Most people today do not experience difficulty in communicating with people with any limitations. This is manifested by feelings of pity, goodwill towards sick people and a willingness to help them whenever possible. Healthy people see people with disabilities as tolerant, kind, open and modest, achieving success in life on their own.

Reference

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