Socialization of Persons with Disabilities in the Inclusive Space

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We can achieve equality and equity when universal values and principles of social responsibility, empathy, cooperation and support are present in all walks of society. Education is a powerful tool to introduce and reinforce the mentioned ideas formally and informally. Integration of countries into the global educational space requires a new philosophy of education based on humanization and modernization of education systems in order to provide quality services for various stakeholders, including those with disabilities. Implementation of inclusive education is an ongoing process and a dominant trend in many countries, which, celebrating their diversity and multiculturalism, have chosen inclusive education for students with disabilities as the dominant form of education. Inclusive education in North America and Western Europe is an important area of education and social policy. Integration of post-soviet into EU space causes positive change in including persons with disabilities in society. Various countries have different needs and peculiarities, some of the EU member states lag behind, but all show constant progress towards equity in education.

There are still difficulties in solving problems of inclusion in the theoretical and practical context in the post-Soviet space and some countries of Eastern Europe. This includes revising and updating regulatory framework for inclusive education, developing educational and methodological support for working with students with SEN, applying rules and principles of universal design to infrastructure and learning environment of educational institutions, allocating funding for social initiatives for people with disabilities, etc. Society should take into consideration the interests and needs of persons with disabilities alongside representatives of disadvantaged and socially vulnerable groups (displaced persons and refugees, children whose parents have disabilities, students from low-income and migrant families, orphans, etc.).

1 International Background of Including Persons with Disabilities

Society should be equally comfortable for all its members to live, study, engage in employment and interact with each other. Many democratic countries can share examples of successful adaptation of the educational environment to the needs and demands of students with disabilities and maintaining a high level of pedagogical interaction and psychological support based on cooperation and co-creation in an inclusive classroom. The last decades showed significant improvement and progress of inclusion in the USA, the UK, Japan, Finland, Czechia and others. For instance, the inclusive initiatives of Joseph Biden's administration include modernizing infrastructure, facilities, and accessibility of schools, investing in teacher training, providing universal access to preschool education and care services, as well as ease the burden of education debts, and supporting those on a low income (Tkhir & Sydoriv, 2022, p. 44).

Socialization of children with disabilities in schools around the world is an important task to provide equal education and create conditions for satisfying cognitive needs of students. Stereotypes are one of the barriers that hinder inclusion. There is no doubt that every person, regardless of his/her ability, origin, religion, beliefs, nationality has equal rights to quality education, still many children with disabilities in countries with low and middle income are deprived of educational opportunities (Budnyk, 2017). In many countries of Eastern Europe, there are certain difficulties in implementing inclusive education because of the inability of schools to react effectively to rapid changes: introducing information and communication technologies, pedagogical innovations regarding the nature and content of teaching, new strategies for pedagogical interaction based on person-oriented education. Post-Soviet countries have actively started to implement inclusive education only in the last decade, so it is too difficult to overcome the stereotypes mentioned above. "A truly inclusive approach to education creates a balance between ensuring that students receive the instruction they need to make progress academically and experiencing a sense of belonging and social acceptance within their schools and classrooms" (Tichá et al., 2018, p. 47). When a person with disability leaves school and starts living independently, the social skills and emotional attitudes obtained while being included in the learning environment will help him/her to be the active community member.

2 Socio-Psychological and Pedagogical Barriers of Inclusion

Merely placing students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms is not sufficient to allow for their social inclusion, and other supports need to be in place

to facilitate their acceptance by and belonging to the peer group (Pavri & Luftig, 2000).

The introduction of inclusive education often hindered by many barriers (Dalin, 1978):

1. *Value barriers.* In the educational process, educators face the problem of value differences. This challenge arises while integrating different categories of students into a regular educational institution: immigrants and displaced persons, students with disabilities, children from poor families, representatives of various ethnic, cultural, religious groups, etc. This may cause obstacles to pedagogical communication and socialization in the educational environment, hence there are certain conflict situations regarding implementation of learning strategies.

2. *Power barriers.* Introduction of any educational reform often leads to changes in the power structures, redistribution of certain duties and obligations, etc. Concerning inclusive education, this barrier is also present, because of the involvement of multidisciplinary professionals in the inclusive process (teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, school psychologists, and medical staff). Therefore, the effectiveness of an inclusive process will depend on a combined team responsibility, mutual understanding, and pedagogical expertise.

3. *Practical barriers.* Inclusive education implies and requires application of universal design, adaptation of the curriculum, instruction and evaluation, methodological and resource support to the needs of students with disabilities. If these requirements are not met, solving social and pedagogical problems of inclusion may face serious practical barriers.

4. *Psychological barriers.* There are often cases when its participants (teachers included) do not support innovations and resist any changes. Their traditional views do not allow proper psychological perception of the inclusive process. Psychological difficulties may arise in the systems "teacher – student with SEND", "parents – teachers", "students with disabilities – students without disabilities", "parents of children with disabilities – school administration", etc. Psychological barriers are of specific nature, their overcoming may demand much time and require professional assistance. Thus, socio-psychological and pedagogical barriers may seriously affect the effectiveness of inclusion. After all, a teacher should be able to facilitate a positive perception of students with SEN and grow optimism and self-confidence of their strengths and learning skills. Positive atmosphere at school, a sense of security and support for parents, teachers and classmates help to overcome any conflicts.

It is no coincidence that scholars emphasize the importance of the emotional factor in educating teenagers in the inclusive process, forming their social-emotional competencies in a family, school, and among peers.

> If students with disabilities are more isolated and/or rejected than their peers without disabilities, the question arises as to how acutely students with disabilities perceive and internalize such feelings of rejection when they occur. Put another way, when these students are actively rejected or ignored by their peers without disabilities, do they perceive and take to heart such rejection and what does that rejection make them feel about their future ability to initiate or sustain appropriate social relationships? (Pavri & Luftig, 2000)

The acute feeling of rejection by a school community can negatively affect learning progress, relationships with peers and teachers. Moreover, social rejection of a child with disabilities at the initial stage of his/her schooling and insufficient interaction with friends may negatively impact a child's future and cause emotional disorders, low self-esteem and fear of being re-excluded from society.

3   Interaction between Teachers and Parents of Students with Disabilities

An important aspect of organizing the work of a teacher in an inclusive class is the establishment of proper social and pedagogical interaction with parents. After all, parents are equal participants in the educational process, especially in the inclusive school. They have the right to choose educational institutions and forms of education for junior children, participate in making an IEP, vote and be elected to the bodies of public self-government of a school; apply to the relevant education management bodies with questions of education and upbringing children, and protect the legitimate interests of children (Budnyk et al., 2018).

Particular attention deserves the problem of involvement of parents in the educational process in the inclusive class. After all, the education of children with SEN is a joint task of parents and teachers. Parents' positive attitude towards these activities certainly contributes to integration processes both in school and in the society as a whole. For the purposeful guidance of family members, the following forms of teachers work are useful: conducting special trainings, purposeful conversations, lectures on raising pedagogical culture of parents, development of appropriate methodological materials, viewing feature films on relevant topics, organization (if necessary) meetings with various specialists (medical practitioners, artists, priests, volunteers, social workers)

(Budnyk et al., 2018). Social-pedagogical work with a family of a child with SEN should take into account that a student's academic progress and well-being largely depend on participation of parents in the process of socialization in the school environment. Parents' feedback and participation can help objectively assess the adequacy of the requirements for providing educational services to their child, take actions in the cases of maladaptation, social exclusion, and psychological or emotional stress.

Consequently, the cooperation of teachers and parents in an inclusive classroom provides for synchronization of the goals, tasks, methods, and forms of organization of the educational process; maintaining psychological comfort and proper social and pedagogical conditions for the development of children with disabilities.

4   Pedagogy of Respect and Celebrating Diversity: A Practical Aspect

Inclusive learning environment is the aim as well as the tool to make school a friendly and barrier-free place for children with disabilities. It has both material and non-material dimensions and calls for universal strategies to promote cooperation, respect, responsibility and recognition of uniqueness and value of each student. Pre-service training of teachers should incorporate techniques to organize an inclusive learning environment in their schools.

"There is a clear need for teacher preparation programs to address the social acceptance of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and to provide teachers with strategies needed to facilitate the social functioning of all their students" (Pavri & Luftig, 2000). Pedagogy of respect and celebrating diversity is an important tool and condition for effective implementation of inclusive education. This idea shaped the mini-experiment, devoted to training pre-service teachers to develop a positive attitude towards children with disabilities and introduce principles of inclusive education while teaching English at preschool and elementary school. As a result, a set of audio-visual aids and tasks for teaching English for young learners have been developed in Precarpathian national university, Ukraine.

The developed course project products were teaching aids, created or adapted for use in inclusive settings (graphic or text posters, grammar tables, anchor charts), electronic versions and guided recommendations for use in a classroom. While designing these course products, students paid attention to the accessibility of the teaching aids for students with various educational needs: visual disabilities, deaf and hard of hearing, developmental, intellectual and behavioral disorders. In particular, considering visual aids, the following features were taken into account: reduced speed of processing visual

information, narrowing or disappearance of visual fields, irregular ocular movements, binocular and stereoscopic vision disorders, color blindness, difficulties in selection and differentiation of colors, sensitivity to contrast changing, ability to perceive simultaneously various features and properties of objects (Fedorenko, 2016, p. 486).

An important feature of the course projects by pre-service teachers was the graphical and textual representation of persons with disabilities on the posters for teaching the English language for children (text, visual and moral and ethical components), which contributed to better communication and socialization of students. Inclusion at the nationwide level in Ukraine is just starting, the majority of teachers, students and parents have had no extensive experience of interacting with students who have disabilities; hence the posters may herald changes and introduce ideas and principles of inclusive education indirectly. "Differing curricular, pedagogical, and evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioral skills in each social setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital" (Anyon, 1980, p. 10).

Educators can introduce ideas and principles of inclusive education in a curriculum indirectly. "Hidden curriculum is an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors which are conveyed or communicated without awareness and are manifested indirectly by words and actions which are parts of the life of everyone in a society" (Alsubaie, 2015, p. 126). In the above-mentioned pedagogical experiment, we have tried to incorporate certain elements of hidden curriculum aiming at indirect communication of the principles and ideas of inclusive education. It has been proved that such educational aids help to raise awareness about inclusive education and disseminate ideas of tolerance, respect, mutual support, adherence to socially accepted rules of conduct, equal rights and opportunities, gender and ability equality. They contribute to productive cooperation of students in a classroom, motivate them to learn English and increase self-esteem of children with disabilities. The ideas about prosocial inclusive rules of behavior as well as principles of universal design in learning (alternative use of audiobooks, iPads, and graphic icons) were also used while developing and testing posters during teaching practice at school. The inclusive education posters have the potential for aesthetic and non-verbal communication of progressive ideas in class, during a break, at parent meetings, guest visits or pedagogical practice (Sydoriv, 2018).

Pedagogy implies a productive dialogue and interaction with students who previously experienced exclusion from school and society. "These students reported an increase in reciprocal friendships and lower levels of social alienation after being in an inclusive classroom for the whole school year" (Pavri & Luftig, 2000).

On-going research in the use of visual aids with inclusive educational strategies and techniques (peer assisted learning, educational assessment and intervention, response to intervention, differentiated instruction) is considered promising and organization of an inclusive learning environment is being discussed with the students.

5   Cooperative Learning

One of the effective forms of learning in an inclusive process is cooperative learning. All students share a common goal working together in groups to achieve it and solving educational tasks. This has a positive effect on children with SEN, as they are in constant contact with their peers, being an integral part of a group, learning from others, offering and defending their opinions, arriving at common decisions.

Much attention is devoted to studying theoretical, philosophical, pedagogical and aesthetical aspects of the contradictions and interactions between the collective and the individual in creative learning processes. This is true with inclusion. Notwithstanding differences, disabilities or special educational needs, it is important to develop student's creativity, individuality and initiative. At the same time, a student with a disability is involved in a partnership collaboration in groups for solving certain educational tasks – Problem Based Learning (PBL). The question arises:

> In the design process there are always many ways and approaches to solve the same problem, so how can we be sure that we choose the right concept to find the optimum solution to practical problems? What is the role of PBL in this context? (Armitage et al., 2015)

A team of professionals working in inclusive settings should organize cooperative learning to provide for the development of individual creative abilities of all students according to the curriculum. Therefore, it is important to create such an educational inclusive environment at school that will stimulate students for constructive, collaborative and contextual learning and development, taking into account individual differences, abilities and disabilities.

6   Conclusions

Socialization of persons with disabilities should consider many aspects of sustainable advance of inclusion. Being a global tendency, it has regional

characteristics when each country develops its own unique strategies. In order to overcome multiple barriers and build the future world on the principles of equity and equality education has to take the following steps:

– adapt and modify curriculum, educational materials and resources according to the new philosophy of education that recognizes and celebrates diversity;
– facilitate cooperation between educational professionals and parents of students with disabilities to meet challenges and eliminate barriers;
– continue thorough study and monitoring to identify social challenges faced by students with disability and immediately address them offering professional psychological and pedagogical assistance;
– pinpoint and overcome stereotypes that endorse negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities concerning their rights to equal education in regular schools with their peers;
– organize the least restrictive educational environment aimed at compensating for adverse experience of socialization of students with disabilities, providing proper assistance in creating favorable conditions for their development and socialization in school;
– develop cooperation and ensure pedagogical and psychological support of parents raising children with disabilities;
– provide support to gifted children paying attention to their special needs;
– plan and implement educational and social interaction of students with and without disabilities in school and community;
– explore and introduce new strategies and practices to facilitate social and psychological inclusion and well-being of persons with disability in education and society; and
– share unique and valuable experience on national and international levels to assist and empower persons with disabilities.

It is vitally important to train teachers to organize and sustain a safe and nurturing inclusive learning environment where students with and without disabilities can develop and gain skills to interact and build the equal society of the future.

Acknowledgement

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