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Inclusion Problems in the Russian General Education System

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ABSTRACT

The research examines the problem of implementing the principle of inclusion in the Russian education system as contributing to the development of inclusive society. The system and actor approaches were used to consider educational inclusion from the perspective of a wide range of actors. The study analyzes the main indicators characterizing the state and development of an inclusive education system taking into account certain barriers to its development. The main problems of implementing educational inclusion into the Russian system of general education are investigated. These include the definition of the object of inclusion, staffing, physical accessibility of educational institutions, adaptation of educational programs, funding, and willingness of different actors of the educational process to inclusion. The main positive changes and difficulties that arise during the implementation of inclusion in the Russian general education system are outlined. Key measures that should be taken to lift existing barriers and promote inclusion are proposed.

KEYWORDS

integration, inclusion, inclusive education, general education, perception stereotypes, educational policy

Introduction

The fundamental principle of modern society is the principle of equality of rights and freedoms, which manifests itself in the formation of an inclusive society. Such a society recognizes the existing differences between people and implies the possibility of including all individuals in social relations. Of particular importance

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is the inclusion of people with disabilities in social processes, since this population category is one of the most vulnerable social groups in any society. Various aspects of effective socialization of the disabled are in the focus of research of many scientific disciplines, including pedagogy, psychology, economics, sociology, medicine, etc.

In recent years, the concept of inclusion as a direction of education humanization has received increased attention in connection with the need to more actively involve the disabled people into the social life. The education system is an important element in establishing an inclusive society and a promoter of the inclusion idea. Since education plays an important role in the reproduction and/or transformation of social inequality and exclusion, inclusive education should be treated as an important component of a social inclusion strategy. The inclusiveness of education is often seen as the possibility of realizing human rights, thus underpinning social justice.

Research into the problems of education inclusion is acquiring greater relevance due to the growing number of children having certain health problems; active migration processes and the respective increase in the number of migrant children in educational organizations; heterogeneity of students with their learning abilities, which requires special approaches to the implementation of the educational process. Social engagement of vulnerable children categories is seen as a priority direction in the Decree of the Russian Federation Government No. 122-p *Ob utverzhenii plana osnovnykh meropriatii, provodimyykh v ramkakh Desiatiletiia detstva, na period do 2027 goda* [On the Approval of the Plan of the Main Activities Carried out Within the Framework of the Decade of Childhood for the Period up to 2027] (2021).

In this article, we set out to examine the main problems associated with introducing inclusion in the context of the Russian general education system.

Conceptual Framework

The review of domestic and foreign scientific literature shows that there is no single interpretation of the term “inclusive education” at the moment. Besides, the definitions of the concept may differ and emphasize the importance of creating an educational environment to smooth the differences or focus on forming certain inclusion values. For example, Grim-Farrell, Bain, and McDonagh (2011) discuss school-wide concern and work on integrating special and general education to provide efficient and quality education for all students. According to D’Alessio (2011), inclusive education is an educational principle aimed at restructuring the education systems and creating more equitable societies for all children’s participation in the learning process, regardless of their state of health, socio-economic, and ethnic origin. As for the Russian scientists, they consider several different interpretations. Sigal (2017) views the concept of “inclusive education” rather multidimensional, based on the recognition of the uniqueness, values, and diversity of children, and the exclusion of any form of their discrimination. In addition, the inclusion and participation of children in the general education system is emphasized, which contributes to their socialization. According to Alekhina (2013), inclusion in education is characterized not only by the inclusion of children with disabilities in a school’s educational process, but also by the transformation of the entire educational system to ensure the educational needs of all children. Still, many specialists follow the

most universal definition of UNESCO (2009), where inclusive education is viewed as a comprehensive phenomenon, and is understood as providing equal opportunities of obtaining quality education for all children without exception.

Some researchers distinguish between interpretations of inclusion in both narrow and broad senses (Ainscow et al., 2006). The first one means promoting the inclusion of a particular group of students, mainly having a disability and learning difficulties in the so-called ordinary educational organizations. The second one states that the concept of inclusion is extended to the entire diversity of learners and the way schools respond to the differences between students and members of the school community. As noted by Mitchell (2005) and Ferguson (2008), now inclusive education goes beyond its traditionally narrow understanding and refers to all possible forms of exclusion (gender, material well-being, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, etc.). These provisions are reflected in the definition of inclusion in international legal papers. We are of the opinion that the broad interpretation of the term under consideration is urgent, since inclusion involves all categories of the population in social processes. Still, in this study the discussion centers on the educational inclusion of children with disabilities. This is due to the greater immediacy of the problem in Russia (in particular, the increase in the number of such children), compared to other groups of children with special educational needs. And in a broader scope, the concept of inclusion is compliant with the vision of Education for All by UNESCO (United Nations, 2000), with no judging by the category of “special education”.

The process of educating children with special needs was largely determined by the attitude of society towards such social groups. This depended upon both the development level of productive forces, production relations and political and cultural factors. In general, the development of inclusive education can be divided into several stages within the scope of medical and social models.

The medical model is represented by the following stages:

- intolerance—the need for caring (since ancient past to 12th century);
- exclusion—recognizing opportunities of education in special institutions (from 12th to 18th centuries);
- segregation (from 18th century to mid of the 20th century);

The social model covers the following periods:

- mainstreaming/integration (the second half of the 20th century to 1980s);
- inclusion (1980s till the present time).

In the ancient and medieval times, there existed a concept in relation to children with non-normative development implying their exclusion, isolation, and ostracism up to physical destruction. By the 12th century, the governors of states started creating shelters for the disabled and proving their understanding the necessity to support them. In Russia, the stage lasted since the adoption of Christianity until the 18th century. At that time, secular orphanages were being built during the Europeanization carried out by Peter the Great (Malofeev, 2018b). Since the 12th century, when humanism ideas and new charity models were developed, there was a transition from individual education to understanding the possibility of teaching children with disabilities. Cultural and socio-economic processes of the 18th–19th centuries in Russia and

abroad humanized the position of the society and contributed to developing a network of special institutions for children with disabilities, thus predetermining the spread of the segregation approach. A number of countries (France, Belgium, England, etc.) adopted laws on the introduction of special education.

One of the first practical attempts to integrated coeducation of children with disabilities and children with normative development was first carried out in the 17th–18th centuries in Germany (Ellger-Rüttgardt, 2008). Still, the medical model dominated until 1960s, which manifested in the segregation and social isolation of children with disabilities, as they were sent to special educational institutions and boarding schools. In the second half of the 20th century, the mainstream was developing in the USA, being the system of various programs focused mainly on expanding social communication rather than having educational goals (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007; Terzi, 2008).

In the 1970s, an alternative to the medical model appeared in the Nordic countries. It was the concept of “normalization” (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980; Nirje, 1969), a component of which was the integration and inclusion in education. Thus, integration was associated with the possibility of teaching small groups of children with special educational needs. However, such a narrow interpretation left out aspects of the quality of the education provided, as integration was seen as a mechanical placement of the disabled children in the school environment. Still, that shifted the focus of the problem from the child to the educational system, and the social model of understanding disability confirmed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, n.d.) replaced the medical approach.

Since then, the inclusive education concept began developing rapidly. The need to develop a network of inclusive schools was embodied in many international instruments: Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), Luxembourg Charter 1996 (European Commission, 1996), the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 (European Communities, 1997), the Madrid Declaration of 2002 (European Congress on Disability, 2002), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 (United Nations, n.d.).

The segregation approach dominated in Russia till the 1990s, and some elements of integration were introduced as a rare experiment. For quite a long time, children with disabilities in boarding schools had to master a compulsory program intended for children with normative development in the USSR. That led to the development of defectology¹ in the country. At that time there were five types of special schools functioning, depending on the type of health disorder. In 1990s the practice of integration was extended to creating remedial classes in comprehensive schools. The inclusion vector in Russian education was set in 2012, the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contributing to it. The fundamentals of state policy on inclusive education are legislated in the Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012)² and *Natsional'naia strategiia deistvii v interesakh detei na 2012–2017 gody* [National Strategy of Action for

¹ In Russian psychology, the field concerned with the education of children with sensory, physical, cognitive, or neurological impairment (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

² Inclusive education means ensuring equal access to education for all taking into account the diversity of special educational needs and individual abilities (Ob obrazovanii, 2012 ; trans. by T. Soloveva & V. Sokolova [T. S. & V. S.]).

Children for 2012–2017] (O Natsional'noi strategii, 2012). Currently, there are several options for the education of children with special educational needs in Russia, namely special education; integrated training (temporary, partial, full integration); distance, home-based, family and inclusive education.

Federal'nye gosudarstvennye obrazovatel'nye standarty (FGOS) [Federal State Educational Standards (FSES)] (Ob utverzhdenii federal'nogo, 2014) for learners with disabilities represent the most significant documents in the sphere of Russian inclusive education, based on the variability of individual educational directions and programs. They were introduced with the first school grades in 2016, and the idea was to include the next stages step by step. Right now, there are no regular FSES for senior learners, but attempts are taken to introduce inclusive education at this level that reveals a number of difficulties. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation adopted the *Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po voprosam organizatsii inkluzivnogo obrazovaniia* [Comprehensive Plan on Organizing Inclusive Education] for the periods of 2016–2017 (pre-school and general education) and 2018–2020 (general and additional education) (Mezhvedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan, 2016, 2018), providing the development of teaching materials, curriculum adapted guidelines, professional standards for special education teachers and tutors, as well as monitoring the creation of necessary conditions for the inclusion process. The Russian Ministry of Education has also drafted the *Strategiia razvitiia obrazovaniia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia i detei s invalidnost'iu v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2030 goda* [Strategy for the Development of Education for Children With Disabilities and Handicapped Children in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030] (Strategiia razvitiia, n.d.), targeted at enhancing the quality and accessibility of education for children with disabilities.

Some foreign researchers regard the inclusive education concept with criticism and claim that under normal conditions teachers may not have the proper education and training on inclusive education. There may also be insufficient material and financial resources; the curriculum for ordinary classes may not be suitable for children with special educational needs and/or persons with disabilities; children may be deprived of the same age peers with similar educational needs and/or disabilities (Hornby, 2012).

According to experts (Balashov et al., 2020; Zinevich et al., 2016), such criticism is based on the idea that existing institutions are unable to achieve the goal of inclusion due to the historical approach to disability, which in foreign science is interpreted as the problem of the social citizenship of people with disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Prince, 2016). At the same time, there is a reasonable opinion in the national science that it is impossible to create full-fledged environment for obtaining quality education by children with special educational needs under conditions of the general school. This is due to the developmental characteristics, as many of such children have shortcomings of perception and memory preventing them from mastering knowledge and skills within the framework of inclusion (Lubovskii, 2016).

Thus, inclusion in general education is the process of including children with special educational needs in the educational space of the school, aimed at all students in general,

and involving the formation of comfortable conditions that meet the characteristics and needs of all students, the socialization, and development of tolerance and humanism.

Materials and Methods

Approaches to the study of the inclusive education problems are closely connected with certain interrelated concepts (social exclusion, social integration, social justice, etc.), since these theories are considered within the context of the general concept of equality in modern conditions. Thus, with regard to social justice, no child should be excluded from the education system, but they should be integrated into it according to their abilities. This study is based on the social approach, which assumes it is the society and the imperfection of the education system in particular that create barriers to the education of children with disabilities. In this respect, the attempt was made to identify the main problems of inclusion in the Russian general education.

Inclusive education is considered as one of the subsystems of the national educational system within the system approach, and its implementation is carried out at every level. The focus of our current study is inclusive education in Russia at the school level, thus it views inclusive policy issues, inclusive practice, and inclusive culture questions. Such aspects as substantive, psychological, pedagogical, socio-cultural, economic, philosophical, political, ideological, and others are presented.

The actor approach was applied to consider the positions of various subjects of educational inclusion. The analysis of normative legal documents and statistical data contributed to a more complete description of the current situation in the field of inclusive education. In addition, in order to achieve the research objectives, generalization methods, comparative and descriptive analysis were used as well.

The research is based on legal acts, which relate to the education of children with disabilities, both international, i.e., Salamanca Statement 1994, Madrid Declaration 2002, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, etc. and Russian, i.e., Desiatiletie detstva na period do 2027 goda [Decade of Childhood for the period up to 2027] (Ob utverzhdenii plana, 2021), Mezhdedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan po organizatsii inkluzivnogo obrazovaniia [Comprehensive Plan on Organizing Inclusive Education] (Mezhdedomstvennyi kompleksnyi plan, 2016, 2018), the state program of the Russian Federation Dostupnaia sreda [Accessible Environment] (Ob utverzhdenii gosudarstvennoi programmy, 2015), etc. To evaluate the current situation in the field of inclusive education in Russia, the statistical data of the Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service] (2022) was used to reflect the growing number of children with disabilities and their general education coverage. Key problems of introducing inclusion into the system of Russian general education are identified through the analysis of the data and the research results obtained by Russian and foreign scientists on the subject matter. The scientific literature was selected using the Scopus³, WoS⁴, and RSCI⁵ databases by keywords. During the abstracts analysis, the publications that directly focus on the subject of the

³ <https://www.scopus.com>

⁴ Web of Science, <https://www.webofscience.com>

⁵ Russian Science Citation Index, <https://www.rsci.ru>

study ($N = 55$) were reviewed. The publications concern specific aspects in accordance with the approach adopted, namely the object of inclusion, staffing, physical accessibility, adaptation of educational programs, financing, attitude to the problem and readiness of parents, teachers, children, and society as a whole. Methods of generalization, comparative and descriptive analysis were used to achieve the goals of the research.

Discussion

In order to further modernize education in Russia based on the principles of humanization and individualization, an integrated approach should be applied to the content and nature of care for children with disabilities in the context of general education (Popov & Soloveva, 2015), which is taking on increasing importance due to a fairly high level of disability among children⁶ (Table 1).

Table 1

The Number of Children With Disabilities in Russia Aged up to 18, Thousand People

Country	2001	2006	2010	2015	2017	2019	2021	2021 to 2001, %
Russian Federation	675	593	519	605	636	670	704	104.3

Note. Source: Rosstat, 2022.

The number of children with disabilities under the age of 18 reduced by 23% in the first decade of the 20th century, with the indicator's growth by 36% for the period 2010–2021, and that was close to 2001 level. At the same time, the number of children with limited ability to self-service and learning increased the most, by 36% and 16% respectively (Rosstat, 2022).

As shown in Table 2, the number of students enrolled in general education institutions for disabled children have increased in recent years.

Table 2

The Main Indicators Characterizing the Condition and Development Opportunities of Inclusion in Russian General Education

Indicators	2011/ 2012	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020
The proportion of general education institutions that created learning environment for disabled children in the total number of general education institutions, %	2.5	21.4	22.4	23.8	24.1	24.5
The proportion of disabled children enrolled in general education institutions, in the total number of students in general education institutions, %	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	4.02
The proportion of disabled children attending educational institutions for preschool education, in total number of students in general education institutions, child-minding %	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1

Note. Source: Rosstat, 2019.

⁶ The present study uses the information on the children with disabilities as statistics concerning the fact that this is exactly what the official statistics deals with. It also should be noted that the qualitative identification of the so-called categories children with special educational needs and children with disabilities is very difficult due to the character of the official statistics.

Meanwhile, the number of schools creating conditions for unhindered access for people with disabilities is increasing (nearly five times as much for the period of 2011–2020) to meet the targets of a number of state programs. In this regard, the percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in general education organizations is also growing. However, the percentage of children with disabilities studying at an ordinary school has slightly changed for the period 2011–2020 being 4.02% of the total number of students in general education institutions in 2020. The same situation concerns children with disabilities who attend kindergartens, as an instance, their proportion in the total number of children attending preschool educational organizations increased by just 0.4 percentage points for the period 2011–2020. As stated in the survey titled *Vyborochnoe nabludenie kachestva i dostupnosti uslug v sfere obrazovaniia, zdavookhraneniia i sotsial'nogo obsluzhivaniia, sodeistviia zaniatosti naseleniia* [Sample Survey of the Quality and Accessibility of Services in the Spheres of Education], as well as health care and social services, employment promotion for the year 2019, 42.3% among children with disabilities aged 3–8 years do not attend preschool and general educational organizations, and 80% do not attend extracurricular activities to develop their abilities (Rosstat, 2019). At the same time, merely 50% of parents are fully satisfied with the school environment for students with disabilities.

Thus, the general education system in Russia in the context of the growing number of children with disabilities is gradually beginning to adapt to the inclusion of this category of children in the school's educational environment. Still, there remain some barriers to further advancement of inclusion practices as small numbers of children with disabilities study in general education organizations. In this regard, the main issues and problems related to the development of inclusion in the Russian general education are considered below.

Inclusive education has a number of positive aspects related to the expansion of learning opportunities and the development of social skills for children with special educational needs, the cultivation of humanity culture and tolerance in children with normative development, the acquisition of positive social experience, etc. However, some issues on the topic are still controversial. We will consider these in more detail below.

The Object of Inclusion

Thus, Kulagina (2013) notes that the definition of “students with disabilities” as recipients of inclusive education, as stated in the Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012), leaves this category of children outside the legislation framework as “children with disabilities without mental or significant physical disabilities” because they do not pass the psychological, medical, and pedagogical commission (PMPC), and thus they cannot get the status of children with disabilities. Then, according to the experts (Alekhina, 2016), the definition of the term “a student with disabilities” in Russian legislative practice does not correlate with the social concept of inclusion, as a result many categories of children are excluded from the process (migrants, gifted children, religious, linguistic, and ethnic minorities, children with learning difficulties, etc.). In order to avoid methodological contradictions, it would seem more correct to use the definition of “a student with special educational needs.”

Staffing of Inclusive Education

The professional standard of an educator obliges the teacher to master technologies of inclusive education. In addition, Federal Law No. 273-FZ *Ob obrazovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [On the Education in the Russian Federation] (2012) prescribes the demand for tutor support of the educational process. In case of assistants and tutors unavailable, the school teachers are responsible for teaching children with disabilities. Therefore, at present, active retraining and advanced training of personnel in the field of inclusive education is conducted in general education organizations. Besides, according to FSES of primary general education, the support of the process of teaching children with disabilities should be carried out by special psychologists, speech pathologists, medical workers, etc. Even correctional institutions do not have special education teachers experienced enough in this field. The situation is further worsened by the fact that modern pedagogical universities do not provide in-depth training in the field of inclusive education, and the number of special education graduates (visual impairment specialists, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, etc.) is largely limited. Furthermore, there are no occupational standards for the sphere of special needs education (Rubtsov et al., 2020). In practice, teachers lack knowledge of characteristics of a child with disabilities, specifics of their family environment, specialized tools for pedagogical work, and the legal framework for inclusion (Hanssen & Erina, 2021; Kantor et al., 2023). The problem of personnel shortage is far from being the only one under consideration. For instance, the introduction of a teacher's efficient contract can promote the advancement of bureaucratic inclusion, since the activities of the teacher are mainly assessed by student performance, including the addition of bonuses to the base salary. As a result, all students should be certified regardless of their educational outcomes. Otherwise, this will negatively affect the performance of the teacher and the organization as a whole. There is a problem of insufficient motivation and financial incentives for teachers as well, since teachers do not receive relevant bonuses in many schools for working with children with disabilities (Kulagina, 2014).

Physical Accessibility of Educational Organizations

The state program of the Russian Federation *Dostupnaia sreda* [Accessible Environment] (Ob utverzhenii gosudarstvennoi programmy, 2015) regulates the increase in the proportion of general education organizations where a universal barrier-free environment for inclusive education of children with disabilities is developed, with up to 22.9% (25% at the outset) of the total number of general education organizations by 2020. In 2020, the value of this indicator was 24.5% (Dostupnaia sreda, 2021). The letter of the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Education and Science No. 01-50-174/07-1968 *O prieme na obuchenie lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia* [On Admission to Education for Persons With Disabilities] (2015) made it an obligation for educational organizations to provide special conditions for training of students with disabilities. Yet, it is necessary to realize the complexity and cost of creating a universal barrier-free environment for all children with disabilities, since students with hearing impairment, visual impairment, musculoskeletal disorders, etc. require different kinds of equipment for studying. Otherwise, shifting a child with

disabilities to a mainstream school without relevant staff and procurement has nothing to do with inclusive education that corresponds to the opportunities and special needs of the child (Malofeev, 2018a).

Adaptation of Educational Programs

We agree with the experts' opinion (Semago et al., 2011) that the process of inclusion should be guided by the principle of conformity to natural laws, i.e., when giving various tasks to children, their natural talents and abilities should be taken into account. In accordance with FSES of primary general education for children with disabilities there are four types of educational programs depending on the level of a child's development. One variant stipulates the possibility of co-education of children with normative development and children with disabilities in the same class with parental consent and the recommendations of PMPC. In this case, not all students with disabilities, particularly mental, can master an educational program, even an adapted one. However, according to the law, the school cannot refuse such children to be admitted.

Some parents go against the recommendations of the PMPC, insisting on their child's education in the general education school, which often does not benefit them. In such cases, the organization of formal inclusion does not give the necessary result. It is no accident that many experts state the necessity of adjustments to be introduced to the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 1082 *Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o psikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskoi komissii* [On Approval of the Regulations on the Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Commission] (2013), the Parental Responsibility Paragraph in particular, in case of non-compliance with the recommendations of the PMPC and on the mandatory implementation of the commission's conclusion in the absence of positive dynamics during the year of training (Beliavskii, 2017).

Teachers are required to develop adapted educational programs and individual curricula, which increases the already high "paper" burden of teachers. However, an inclusive approach to education requires that a special teaching methodology should be developed and the needs of all children should be taken into account (Belenkova, 2011). In that context, there appears a challenging idea to develop a different categorization of children with disabilities and health limitations, considering the dynamics and history of the child development (Karabanova & Malofeev, 2019). That allows to improve educational programs and differentiate the content of children education according to their development scenarios.

The problems of readiness of various subjects in the educational process for inclusive education to be introduced. Primarily, it is the schools' readiness to create the necessary conditions for learning. It is important to avoid a formal approach to inclusive education, when a child with special educational needs is admitted to a general school, but for some reasons is provided home or distance education, which does not allow to fully achieve the goals of inclusion.

The attitude of teachers towards the inclusion processes in the education system is generally positive. However, many people note a number of barriers that interfere with the process, mainly related to the limited resources of educational organizations

(financial, material, technical, staffing, etc.). At the same time, some studies indicate that the idea of joint learning is not always welcome by teachers. For example, according to a survey conducted in the Republic of Dagestan, 72% of primary school teachers disagree on the education of children with disabilities in a regular class (Fetalieva et al., 2016). Among the difficulties, teachers often pointed out the challenges of the educational process, the growth of methodological work, poor resource equipment (Goriainova & Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2020). However, the creation of relevant conditions for tutors and special education teachers increases the share of teachers who agree to implement inclusive education programs to 63%. Studies show that teachers doubt their abilities and experience the fear of working with children with disabilities. Young teachers clearly demonstrate it, not being able to find common language with such children. Teacher education students demonstrate similar feelings, establishing lack of knowledge and skills acquired (Kozlova, 2021). In addition, teachers draw attention to psychological tension as a result of regular parents' reproach for organizing the educational process (Panfilov, 2022). The first thing here is to understand and accept the idea of inclusion, the psychological readiness of the teacher to work with children with special educational needs, since this largely determines the success of social inclusion. In addition, an inclusive competence of the teacher becomes an important condition to be formed while obtaining the pedagogical education.

Parents are also an important link in the process of introducing inclusion. The success in teaching children with special educational needs largely depends on their parents' competence level. Nevertheless, parents are often unaware of the information about education options. An important aspect in this case is that they should be informed on time about the possibilities of developing children's educational directions, and be given the necessary help in building an individual educational route for the child. However, research shows that parents are not always ready for co-education of children with disabilities and children with normative development. Thus, a survey conducted in the Tomsk region showed that only 30% of parents consider co-education comfortable (Buravleva & Iglovskaja, 2012). Parents admit it is preferable for children with complex developmental disabilities to study in special schools or separately (Slusareva, 2020). At the same time, parents of children with disabilities having experience of inclusive education note that this contributes to improving the children's psychological state (Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). Meanwhile, sociological data indicates the level of parents' satisfaction with the inclusive education of their children being average. Such a situation demands further work in this direction (Bolshakov & Dolgova, 2022).

Russian and foreign studies show that the *attitude of children without disabilities* to their peers with disabilities can be characterized as estranged, and such co-education may not be entirely pleasant to both parties (Vlachou, 1997). Still, schoolchildren without disabilities perceive children with disabilities as requiring help, and, on the whole, demonstrate loyalty to their acceptance (Zaitsev & Selivanova, 2015). Besides, participation and acceptance are the most important characteristics of the inclusion process. Children with disabilities note the benefits of collaborative learning, motivating them to develop and communicate with peers (Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). Yet, the subjects of the educational process demonstrate the greatest tolerance for students with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, hearing,

vision, and the least tolerance for children with intellectual disabilities (Iarskaia-Smirnova & Loshakova, 2003; Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). In this regard, an important aspect is the students' awareness about various life spheres and problems faced by people with disabilities. Thus, well-informed schoolchildren show a more positive attitude towards people with disabilities and the implementation of inclusive education (Badaraev & Ukraintseva, 2023).

Readiness of the Society

The perception of a child with disabilities as a full member of the society depends largely on the mainstream ideology, the level of cultural development and tolerance. This determines the differences in the time of implementing educational inclusion in different countries of the world to a great extent. Policy regarding persons with disabilities is closely related to the broader context, where such people are often excluded from life activities (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). According to experts, any political idea focused on increasing equality and reducing exclusion contains a contradiction, since it virtually sustains separating people with normative and non-normative development for the purposes of discussion (Magnússon, 2019). Studies show that at present the “defect-oriented approach” remains quite widespread in the Russian society (Nazarova, 2016), which focuses on the limitations of children's health (disabled people, sick people, children with disabilities, etc.). This consideration gives rise to the so-called perception stereotypes that are conveyed to teachers and children, e.g., barriers of incorrect installation of consciousness, barriers of negative emotions, etc.) (Sagitova, 2014; trans. by T. S. & V. S.). It is no coincidence that the surveys show the society is not ready for the integration of people with disabilities, educational inclusion among other things (Kondakova & Fakhradova, 2015; Otnoshenie obshchestva, 2017). It is necessary to shift the perception of people with disabilities known as “problematic” to their positive and resourceful opportunities, this regards children in the educational process as well (Usanova, 2021). The education system should expand opportunities of every member in the society (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2022), and antidiscrimination towards realizing the right of the child to education and getting it on an equal basis with peers should be considered the key value imperative. The philosophy of inclusive education involves organizing conditions that encourage awareness and acceptance of human diversity, integration of all individuals in the society and their fulfillment of key social roles.

Financing

The education of children with special educational needs is carried out according to the adapted educational programs, and their implementation is provided by special funding standards. Yet, according to the study conducted by the National Research University Higher School of Economics in 2016, only 18 out of 89 regions in Russia have adopted such standards for creating conditions for inclusive education at general education schools (Abankina et al., 2016). Population polls show that the allocated funding is sufficient for providing the simplest conditions, while many children with disabilities require more sophisticated equipment (Buravleva & Iglovskaya, 2012). In addition, with the introduction of tutor and teacher's assistant positions, additional financial resources will also be required.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to note the positive shifts in the development of inclusive education in Russia. They are recognized in the adoption of a number of significant normative and legal acts and federal state educational standards. At the same time, the process of introducing inclusion in practice faces a number of difficulties related to the achievement of the goals and requirements regulated by these documents (financial, infrastructural, cultural, social barriers, etc.). These problems are typical both for Russia and some other countries, Slovakia, for instance (Belková et al., 2021). On the one hand, this is the unavailability of educational organizations for inclusion in the absence of necessary conditions for inclusive education, lack of funding, etc. And a challenge here is training of teachers (including tutors and assistants) and improving their qualifications, as well as providing methodological and informational support. This aspect is of particular importance in view of the shortage of medical and pedagogical personnel (psychologists, special education teachers, social care teachers, etc.) due to optimization processes in education.

On the other hand, a serious barrier is social and psychological unpreparedness of subjects of the educational process for inclusion to be introduced, due to the perception stereotypes of people with disabilities. It is especially important to improve the inclusive culture of the educational environment, firstly in providing special conditions necessary to implement inclusion (external inclusive culture), and secondly in developing general inclusive values, comprising educational ones (internal inclusive culture) (Bagdueva et al., 2017). Changing stereotypes about children with special educational needs both by the educational process subjects, and by society as a whole is critically important. This will contribute to the realization of the social inclusion model. A significant role in this respect is played by the media, highlighting the problems of children with special educational needs.

Another area that contributes to the development of educational inclusion is the use of the social innovation and social entrepreneurship potential, which is widely used abroad to increase the equality of educational opportunities for all population categories. For inclusion to be successful, it is also important to develop a system of early detection and care for children with special educational needs. This direction is the vital one as stated in *Kontsepsiia razvitiia obrazovaniia obuchaiushchikhsia s invalidnost'iu i ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia do 2030 g.* [The concept for the development of education of students with disabilities and special needs until 2030] (Malofeev, 2019).

In addition, it is necessary to provide comprehensive support at all stages of the educational process, ensuring the selection of the optimal model for each child. The formal approach in organizing inclusion should be avoided. For example, for distance learning of children with disabilities, group methods of work should be used. It is essential to further improve the regulatory and legal framework for the development of inclusive education, in particular, the development and adoption of FSES for basic general and secondary general education, the Concept for the development of education of students with disabilities and special needs in the Russian Federation; regional programs for the development of inclusive education should be promoted as well.

The process of introducing inclusion is long-term, and the system of Russian education is at the initial stage of its development. At the same time, many reform initiatives in education (optimization of the educational network and its consequences including an increase in students' number per class and staff reduction at schools, as well as training and support staff, an increase in the educational and "paper" burden of teachers, etc.) limit the possibilities of further inclusion development. While mass school focuses on results, success is not entirely consistent with the values of inclusive education, that first of all appreciates involving in the educational process and preparing for adult life in the future. This gives rise to value-based conflicts.

Besides, the focus on implementing targets to involve children with disabilities in the education creates the risks of a formal approach to the inclusive education implementation. As Malofeev (2018a) has repeatedly claimed, without the state support and readiness of society the declaration of unlimited rights causes the danger of replacing helpful inclusion with the formal deinstitutionalization of a student with special educational needs. This not only fails to improve, instead, this worsens their situation. It is necessary to adapt the assessment criteria of students' educational achievements within inclusive education. And the quality and effectiveness assessment of inclusive education should be carried out according to adapted indicators and norms.

Therefore, not only comprehensive, organizational, and technical changes in the education system are important, but also the transformation of the entire education philosophy involving its adaptiveness for the development, self-determination, and self-realization of children with special needs, their friendly interaction with children without disabilities peers, helpful for each of them. Likewise, important things are mindset changes in the public consciousness, acceptance of each person, and an emphasis on unity and opportunities rather than differences and problems. The lifting of existing barriers will promote the inclusion development in the Russian general education system.

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