

Studying the attitude of future teachers towards inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *The aim of the current research is defining the attitude of future teachers to inclusive education. In total, 108 students of pedagogical specialities were recruited. In order to define the attitude «The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised Scale (SACIE-R)» method was used. The results of the research show the neutral attitude of the future teachers to inclusive education and need of purposeful work on their preparation for work in the conditions of inclusive education.*

Keywords: *Inclusion; inclusive education; future teachers; pupils with disabilities, special educational needs*

1 Introduction

Teacher is a central figure in the pedagogical process and determining factor in upbringing the future generation, in particular, in the inclusive education process.

The attitude of a teacher towards inclusive education plays a main role in efficiency of implementation of inclusive education (Kraska & Boyle, 2014).

The analysis of foreign researches carried out by Anke de Boer, Sip Jan Pijl and Alexander Minnaert (2011) shows predominance of teachers' neutral or negative attitudes to inclusion. Most of the teachers either had a neutral or negative attitude towards inclusive education and did not think that they were well prepared for training of children with special educational needs (SEN).

Most studies have focused on studying the effect of different variables on the attitude of teachers to inclusive education. Among the main variables are:

- 1) Teacher's gender. A number of researches have found that women are more positive towards inclusive education than men (Savolainen et al., 2012). However,

other researchers have found no significant differences between attitudes towards inclusion between women and men (Haq & Mundia, 2012).

- 2) Teaching experience. Young teachers with work experience from 1 to 10 years are more positive concerning inclusive education, than their colleagues with a long standing (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013).
- 3) Teaching experience with SEN children. Most researchers note that teachers with teaching experience of children with SEN are more positive to inclusion, than teachers without such experience (Specht et al., 2016).
- 4) Special training. A number of researchers state that specialized training, studying a module about inclusive education or a professional development course influence improvement of the attitude to inclusive education (Kraska & Boyle, 2014).
- 5) Type of disorder. Teachers are more positive to inclusion of pupils with physical or sensory impairments (Muwana & Octrosky, 2014). Least of all they would like to teach in a class with children with intellectual disabilities, emotional or behavioural disorders or with more difficult, complex disorders (Hastings & Oakford, 2003).

In this research we did not try to determine the dependence of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on all of the above listed variables. In Kazakhstan, inclusive education is only at a stage of formation, future teachers have neither any work experience with children with SEN, nor special training. Therefore, the aim of our research is to determine the general attitude of the future teachers towards inclusion.

2 Inclusive education in Kazakhstan

One of the directions of education modernization in the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) is ensuring the right of children with special needs the access to quality education, their integration into society through inclusion in educational space.

According to the Law „On Education“ of the RK (2007) inclusive education is the joint education and training of persons with disabilities, providing equal access with other categories of pupils to the appropriate educational programs, correctional-pedagogical and social support of development by means of providing special conditions.

In Kazakhstan the legal framework for children with SEN and disabled is formed, which is aligned with the international instruments in education field of SEN children.

Today a child with disabilities can study:

- 1) In level maintenance depending on needs of the pupil practices in inclusive schools. The pupil is followed by a tutor, whose main task is to give physical support to a child, to help to move, feel confident in the class and school. Besides,

some children with special development need a tutor trained in methods of special correctional pedagogy.

- 2) In a **special school** and **inclusive school**. There are 27 inclusive schools in the country (EGov RK, 2017a). There are 102 special schools in the country now. Here is a list of their specific types of disorders:
 - for blind children – 3 schools in the country;
 - for visually impaired – 7 schools;
 - for the deaf – 10 schools;
 - for hearing-impaired – 9 schools;
 - for children with speech impairments – 9 schools;
 - for children with disorders of the musculoskeletal system – 3 schools;
 - for children with mental retardation – 47 schools;
 - for children with a delay of mental development – 14 schools.
- 3) In a **special class** of a mainstream school. There are about 1 219 in the country. However, special class pupils do not get additional tutors' support.
- 4) A **comprehensive (mainstream) school** is for pupils with slight disorders. There are 7 307 mainstream schools in the country at the moment. However, additional support is not provided there.
- 5) **Home education** is carried out in the presence of indications according to the conclusion of psychological – medical-pedagogical consultation for children who cannot attend school for a long time due to health problems.

Education market for children with disabilities is extremely narrow. For example, Almaty city, with a population of 2 million people, has only 2 inclusive schools (Kurmanzhanova & Kenzhakimova, 2015). There are few private centres for children with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD). However, there are no care centres and after-school professional training for children with disabilities older than 18 years.

Additional support for SEN children is carried out only in inclusive schools, the number of which is small, where for a child, depending on the requirements can be appointed 2 tutors: for the care and special handling (e.g. typhlo teacher for a child with vision problems).

Other children with SEN studying in special classes of a mainstream school are deprived of the necessary additional educational support.

In Kazakhstan teachers' training to work in inclusive education system is carried out by:

- 1) the National Scientific and Practical Centre of correctional pedagogy;
- 2) the Centre for Social Adaptation and Vocational Rehabilitation of children and adolescents with mental and physical development, that:

- conducts short training courses for professionals working in the field of special education: pathologists, speech therapists, oligophrenia teachers, audiologists, typhlo teachers, psychologists, social workers;
 - conducts refresher courses for teachers with higher pedagogical education, working or wishing to work in special and inclusive education, of a duration of 1 year.
- 3) „Orleu“ national centre has methodical association of inclusive education, where training seminars, creative laboratories and workshops are delivered for teachers, psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, comprehensive and inclusive schools` academic affairs deputy directors` (Abisheva, 2016).

In addition, the quota for admission to study in the organization of higher education for the first and the second groups of disabled and children with disabilities are provided (EGov RK, 2017b). During the period 2012-2014, under the quota for the disabled more than 680 people in higher education institutions and 1,146 people with disabilities in the organization of technical and vocational education were accepted. At colleges and universities there is no support for such students and no staff of assistive technology.

Inclusive education in Kazakhstan is developing insufficiently. Children with SEN have limited access to quality education. Achievement of quality education for children with SEN is interfered by a lack of well-trained pedagogical personnel, impracticality of school buildings, buildings of colleges and universities, lack of individualized models and training programs, absence of support services for children with SEN at different education levels.

In 2010 the State program of a development of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the program, an increase in number of inclusive schools up to 70% of the total number of schools is planned by the year 2020. In this connection, there is a need for teachers trained to work in conditions of inclusive education during their study period at the university.

3 Methods

In the questionnaire 108 students studying «Education» fields at S.Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University and Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute took part.

All participants were in the age range of 25 and under. Most respondents were females (83.3 %) and school graduates (88%), only 12% had specialized vocational education.

The survey results presented in Table 1 show that most of the students had experience with children with disabilities (64.8%) and did not have experience of preparation for their training (73.1%).

Knowledge of the local legislation and policy for children with disabilities is also at a low level: 66.6%. Vast majority of students have no experience of training children with disabilities (69.4%).

In this connection the low level of confidence in teaching children with disabilities prevails among future teachers (52.7%).

Table 1: Personal and professional characteristics of the sample

Characteristics		N	%
I am training to teach in:	Early Childhood	4	3.7
	Primary school	3	2.8
	Secondary school	85	78.7
	Special Education	16	14.8
Gender	Male	18	16.7
	Female	90	83.3
Age	25 years or below	108	100
Level of education	Secondary school	95	88
	Other (college)	13	12
Interaction with persons with disabilities	Yes	38	35.2
	No	70	64.8
Training in Special Needs Education	None	79	73.1
	Some	28	25.9
	High (at least 40 hrs)	1	0.9
Knowledge of the local legislation or policy as it pertains to children with disabilities	None	25	23.1
	Poor	47	43.5
	Average	33	30.6
	Good	2	1.9
	Very Good	1	0.9
Confidence in teaching or supporting students with disabilities	Very Low	17	15.7
	Low	40	37.0
	Average	43	39.8
	High	5	4.6
	Very high	3	2.8
Experience in teaching or supporting students with disabilities	Nil	75	69.4
	Some	33	30.6
Total		108	100

For the questionnaire «The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale» (Forlin et al., 2011) method was used which comprises 15 scales and 3 subscales:

- attitude towards inclusion scale – questions 3, 6, 8, 12, 15 of the questionnaire;
- fears/concern scale concerning inclusion: questions 1, 4, 7, 10, 14 of the questionnaire;

- a scale of sentiments at interaction with children with disabilities: questions 2, 5, 9, 11, 13 of the questionnaire.

At the same time a scale of sentiments and fears were coded reverse to a scale of the attitudes towards inclusion.

Participants estimated the consent with statements, using a four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree). The reverse coding was applied to a scale of sentiments and concerns so that the maximum point had positive value for all questions of the questionnaire and characterized the positive attitude towards inclusion. Calculation of average assessment on all 3 scales is overall assessment of SACIE-R.

In order to determine the reliability we used the measure of the internal consistency of the scales – a Cronbach's (1951) Alpha coefficient (α). Total coefficient a Cronbach's Alpha equal to 0.753 (scale of sentiments α = 0.733, the scale of fears α = 0.706, scale of attitudes α = 0.702), which is an acceptable indicator of reliability.

The questionnaire also contains additional questions of the most important characteristics of participants (sex, age, education level, etc.).

4 Results

Table 2 contains detailed information on participants' answers to the questionnaire. The general attitude to inclusion of future teachers is neutral; the average value of all SACIE-R elements is 2.43 with a fairly wide range, which means the existence of both negative and positive values. Most importantly, the range of sentiments is 2.58 (SD = 1.046), which shows feelings people experience when interacting with children with disabilities.

Results on this scale show that future teachers are not afraid of interacting with children with disabilities ($M = 3.28$), of facing them ($M = 3.19$), and do not feel a shock when meeting with people with difficult physical violations ($M = 3.14$). The vast majority of students do not experience difficulties in communication with children with disabilities, but they are somewhat revolted by a possibility of existence of disability in themselves ($M = 1.71$, $M = 1.6$).

The lowest average has a scale ratio 2.29 (SD = 1.014), which indicates that future teachers are not ready for inclusion of children with SEN and disabilities in mainstream classes. Average value on a scale of fears is equal to 2.41 (SD = 1.220).

The main problems which disturb future teachers are connected with a lack of necessary knowledge and skills for realization of inclusive practice ($M = 2.09$), acceptance of children with the rest of the class (2.03), as well as the complexity of the distribution of attention to all pupils in an inclusive class (2.17).

Table 2: Means and standard deviations for scores on the SACIE-R Scale

Item	M	SD
Sentiments	2.58	1.046
I tend to make contacts with people with disabilities brief and I finish them as quickly as possible.	3.28	0.915
I am afraid to look directly at a person with a disability.	3.19	0.997
I find it difficult to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities.	3.14	0.880
I dread the thought that I could eventually end up with a disability.	1.71	1.094
I would feel terrible if I had a disability.	1.6	0.896
Concerns	2.41	1.220
I am concerned that I will be more stressed if I have students with disabilities in my class.	3.11	0.950
I am concerned that my workload will increase if I have students with disabilities in my class.	2.66	1.069
I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.	2.17	0.859
I am concerned that I do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.	2.09	1.000
I am concerned that students with disabilities will not be accepted by the rest of the class.	2.00	0.917
Attitudes	2.29	1.014
Students who frequently fail exams should be in regular classes.	2.72	1.031
Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.	2.55	0.980
Students who are inattentive should be in regular classes.	2.30	0.979
Students who need an individualized academic program should be in regular classes.	2.03	0.932
Students who require communicative technologies (e.g. Braille/sign language) should be in regular classes.	1.85	0.905
Total	2.43	1.104

5 Discussion and conclusion

Specific character of educational space in the Republic of Kazakhstan is characterized by long-term existence of two systems of special and traditional learning. Inclusive education is at a stage of the formation and is now developing in insufficient degree. One of the reasons is the unavailability of teachers to inclusive practice. This research also confirms that future teachers do not feel assured to work in the conditions of inclusive education and show the neutral attitude towards inclusion.

Our research does not contradict the results of the international researches about prevalence of the neutral or negative attitudes of the teachers (Poon et al., 2016), especially in the countries where inclusive education has a short history of its existence (Galović, Brojčin & Glumbić, 2014).

As neutral or negative attitude of teachers may have devastating consequences for children with limited opportunities, and lead to feelings of alienation, psycho-social distress (Thaver & Lim, 2014), it is necessary to implement the targeted training of future teachers for realization of inclusive practice, particularly in the development of practical methods and technologies that are used in inclusive classes. Training of teachers and future teachers considerably increases the positive attitudes, willingness to work in the conditions of inclusive education (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995).

Lambe and Bones (2007) research also approves positive influence of pedagogical specialties students' teaching practices on improvement of the attitudes towards inclusion, reduction of anxiety and concerns about the implementation of inclusive practices.

Need for trained teachers to meet the needs of all pupils becomes obvious to provide not only equal opportunities for all, but also for the formation of inclusive education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In this connection, in our country in 2016-2017 academic year the obligatory module on "A basis of inclusive education", aimed at the formation of future teachers competences for implementation of successful inclusive practice has been introduced into the standard plan of pedagogical specialties. It is believed that it will facilitate a more inclusive approach from new graduates of pedagogical specialties.

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