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The Role of the Teacher in the Inclusive Education System

Abstract

The article is devoted to an important problem in the field of pedagogy – inclusive education. In the modern world, discussions about expanding the concept of inclusion are becoming increasingly popular. This article examines the role of the teacher in inclusive education. Education is known to be an important factor influencing social processes and serves to shape the qualities and values that define the individual. Democratic education ensures equal rights to education for all members of society, both able-bodied and disabled.

The article establishes that an inclusive educational environment is a space in which children with varying educational abilities, both those with and without disabilities, learn together. In this system, a special role is assigned to the teacher, who must be not simply a purveyor of knowledge but a sensitive, flexible, and qualified mentor capable of shaping the education and development of all students.

The key idea emphasized is that cultural-historical theory suggests that learning and personal development depend on the social environment, interaction, and collaborative activities. This is an important foundation for inclusion, as interaction, the social environment, and support play a significant role.

Keywords: pedagogy, education, upbringing, inclusivity, students, teacher

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İnkluziv təhsil sistemində müəllimin rolu

Xülasə

Araşdırılan məqalə pedaqogika sahəsində mühüm bir problemə – inklüziv təhsilə həsr olunmuşdur. Müasir dünyada inklüzivlik konsepsiyasının genişləndirilməsi ilə bağlı müzakirələr getdikcə populyarlaşır. Bu məqalədə inklüziv təhsildə müəllimin rolu araşdırılır. Bildiyimiz kimi, təhsil sosial proseslərə təsir edən mühüm amil kimi tanınır və şəxsiyyəti müəyyən edən keyfiyyət və dəyərlərin formalaşmasına xidmət edir. Demokratik təhsil cəmiyyətin bütün üzvləri – həm əmək qabiliyyətli, həm də əlilliyi olan şəxslər üçün bərabər təhsil hüquqlarını təmin edir.

Məqalədə müəyyən edilir ki, inklüziv təhsil mühiti müxtəlif təhsil qabiliyyətinə malik, həm əlilliyi olan, həm də olmayan uşaqların birgə təhsil aldıqları məkandır. Bu sistemdə müəllimə xüsusi rol verilir: o, sadəcə biliyin daşıyıcısı deyil, bütün tələbələrin təhsilini və inkişafını formalaşdırmağa qadir olan həssas, çevik və ixtisaslı mentor olmalıdır.

Vurğulanan əsas məqsəd ondan ibarətdir ki, mədəni-tarixi nəzəriyyə öyrənmə və şəxsi inkişafın sosial mühitdən, qarşılıqlı əlaqədən və birgə fəaliyyətdən asılı olması ideyasını irəli sürür. Bu, inklüzivlik və inklüziv təhsil üçün mühüm təməldir, çünki qarşılıqlı əlaqə, sosial mühit və dəstək burada əsas rol oynayır.

Açar sözlər: pedaqogika, təhsil, tərbiyə, inklüzivlik, tələbələr, müəllim

Introduction

The modern education system is undergoing profound transformations related to the implementation of the principles of humanization, equality, and accessibility of education for all categories of students. One of the key directions of these transformations is the development of inclusive education, which involves joint education of children with special educational needs and their normally developing peers. In the context of inclusion, the role of the teacher becomes central, since it is the teacher who mediates between the child, the team, and the educational environment. The basis of inclusion is the recognition of diversity and individual differences as a natural phenomenon, and not as an obstacle to learning. In this regard, the main task of the educational system is to create conditions under which every child can realize their potential (*İnklüziv təhsil: məlumat kitabçası*, 2018).

Discussions and Results. Modern Concepts, Models, and Principles

The principle of individualization and differentiation of learning is the adaptation of the content, methods, forms, and pace of learning for different students (Kolesnikova, 2020; *Salamanca Bəyannaməsi*, 1994; Utley, Mortweet, & Greenwood, 1997).

Universal Design for Learning ensures that educational materials, methods, and spaces are initially adapted to the diversity of students. Pedagogy of cooperation and partnership (between teachers, between family and school), and interdisciplinarity are key principles (Asmolov, 2019).

Key principles and conditions of implementation:

The principle of equality and access — every child has the right to education, and the school must be ready to accept everyone.

Adaptation of the environment (barrier-free environment → barrier-free): physical, methodological, and psychological accessibility; adaptation of infrastructure and educational materials.

"Everyone has the right to communicate. Consideration of the right to communicate as a principle of inclusive education is based on a vital moral and psychological need of a person. As a social being, a person is formed as a personality in the process of communicating with other people and socializing. Ensuring the right to communicate is of great importance in the process of adaptation of people with disabilities to communication" (Fedoseyeva, 2022, p. 14).

Research

Support and resource support: specialists (typhlopedagogues, speech therapists, psychologists), methodological assistance, and assistive technologies.

Flexibility of the learning process: differentiation, individual trajectories, variability of pace and forms of learning.

Quality assessment and monitoring: tracking whether academic, social, and personal goals are being achieved; adjusting practices based on feedback and research.

Problems and Challenges

- Uneven implementation: In different regions, schools have varying levels of readiness and resources.
- Insufficient teacher training: Not all teachers possess the competence to work with student diversity.
- Cultural and psychological barriers: Prejudice, lack of acceptance of differences, and stigmatization.
- Financial and infrastructural constraints: Insufficient funds, limited adapted environments, and lack of technologies.
- Legislative nuances: Although legal acts may exist, clear standards, responsibilities, and control mechanisms are not always established.

Current Trends and Prospects

Development of models and practices based on *Universal Design*, partnership, and technological innovation; strengthening interdisciplinary research and exchange of experience between regions and countries; enhancing the regulatory framework and standardizing quality requirements; promoting professional development of teachers, pedagogical culture, and acceptance of diversity as a societal value.

Psychological and Pedagogical Features of a Teacher's Work in an Inclusive Environment

A teacher in an inclusive environment should have a high degree of empathy, tolerance, and flexibility of thinking. He or she acts not only as a carrier of knowledge but also as an organizer of joint activities, a motivator, and a mentor who can take into account the individual educational needs of each child (Solov'yeva, 2021).

"The development of inclusive education is one of the priorities of educational policy in many countries of the world. The ongoing reforms are aimed at bringing education in line with international principles and standards. One of these principles is the humanization of education and its compliance with human rights standards" (Davud, 2014, p. 10).

Psychological and pedagogical competence includes knowledge about age psychology, the peculiarities of different nosological groups, methods of correctional and developmental education, and the ability to adapt educational material.

Personal readiness: patience, empathy, resistance to stress, reduction of conservatism in pedagogical attitudes, and openness to change.

Emotional and psychological stability: working with children with special needs is often associated with emotional stress and the need to cope with frustration in children and in oneself.

Creating and maintaining a barrier-free environment is not only physical (accessibility of premises, equipment) but also methodological and pedagogical: adapted textbooks, assistive technologies, and visual, auditory, and motor support.

Communication and interaction — with the child, parents, assistants, special educators, and psychologists. A teacher should be able to establish trusting relationships, use effective communication methods, and adapt their communication style (Utley, Mortweet, & Greenwood, 1997).

3. Strategies and Methods

- *Universal Design for Learning* — lesson planning considering different ways of perception, types of intelligence, and various levels of preparation.
- Correctional and developmental methods — classes with a speech therapist, defectologist, typhlopedagogue, and other specialists; group and individual remedial classes.
- Pedagogy of cooperation — interaction among all participants: students (with and without disabilities), teachers, parents, and external specialists. This approach enables comprehensive support and shared responsibility.

4. Psychological Obstacles and Difficulties

- Stress, emotional burnout, decreased self-efficacy — especially in the absence of adequate support, resources, and preparedness.
- Negative attitudes and prejudices — from teachers, parents, and peers. Sometimes, a teacher has to overcome the fear of "not being able to cope," doubts, and fear of responsibility.
- Uncertainty and complexity of classroom management — a class can be very diverse in abilities, needs, and learning pace, which requires high flexibility and adaptability from the teacher.

5. Conditions That Facilitate the Teacher's Work

- Methodological support and professional training — participation in courses, training sessions, experience exchange, and mentoring.
- Resource and auxiliary facilities — access to assistive technologies, specialized materials, equipment, and specialists.
- Organizational support — small classroom sizes, teaching assistants, clear distribution of responsibilities, and administrative backing.

6. The Role of Assessment and Monitoring

Diagnosis of the initial level of a child with disabilities involves identifying individual capabilities, characteristics, and developmental areas.

Continuous assessment of the learning process — adapting pace, forms, and methods; timely detection of difficulties and their correction.

Teacher's feedback and introspection: the teacher must analyze their work, assess children's reactions, modify approaches, and maintain flexibility.

Professional Competencies and Teacher Training.

A modern teacher should possess a set of professional competencies, including psychological, pedagogical, social, communicative, and special competencies. The teacher's ability to adapt curricula, use differentiated teaching methods, and apply modern technologies is important. Teachers' training for inclusive activities should be systematic and continuous, including advanced training courses, internships, and the exchange of experience with colleagues (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

Professional competence is an integral characteristic of a teacher, encompassing knowledge, skills, personal qualities, motivation, and a professional stance that ensure the effective fulfillment of pedagogical tasks. It includes three levels: cognitive (knowledge, understanding); operational-activity (skills, abilities); and personal-value (motivation, attitudes, responsibility).

2. The Main Types of Professional Competencies of a Teacher

a) Communicative competence — the ability to build effective communication with students, parents, and colleagues, and to interact in a multidisciplinary team (especially with speech therapists, speech pathologists, and psychologists).

b) Psychological and pedagogical competence — knowledge of the age and individual characteristics of students (including children with disabilities), the ability to select appropriate teaching and upbringing methods, and the creation of a comfortable educational environment.

3. Teacher's Preparation for Professional Activity

The formation of professional competencies is carried out at three levels:

1. Basic pedagogical education — retraining to obtain new qualifications (for example, "teacher-defectologist," "tutor," etc.).

2. Continuous self-education and development — participation in webinars, professional communities, internships, and seminars; reading literature, sharing experiences, maintaining a pedagogical blog, and participating in professional skills competitions.

It is also important to be ready to use special educational technologies: visual schedules, PECS cards, sensory unloading techniques, and alternative communication methods.

Interaction Between the Teacher, the Family, and Specialists

The effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the interaction between the teacher, the child's family, and specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, speech pathologists). The teacher should maintain open and respectful communication with parents, involving them in the educational process. The teamwork of specialists contributes to the comprehensive support of the child and allows timely adjustment of individual educational routes (*İnklüziv təhsilə cəlb olunan uşaqlarla işin aparılması*, 2020).

Such cooperation is called *interdisciplinary interaction* or the *team approach*. It provides comprehensive support for the child, both at school and at home.

Teacher's interaction with the student's family

Objectives: establishing a relationship of trust; identifying the individual characteristics of the child; coordinating goals and teaching methods; supporting parental competence; jointly solving emerging difficulties.

Forms of interaction: individual conversations and consultations; parent-teacher conferences; joint participation in correctional and developmental activities; maintaining observation and feedback diaries; parental support in the child's learning and motivation; involving parents in school life (holidays, projects, etc.).

Features: it is important not to evaluate, but to support parents — especially if they are experiencing stress or struggling with a diagnosis. The teacher acts as a partner, not a supervisor, and helps parents see the child's potential, not only his or her difficulties.

In inclusive practice, educational consultations play a special role — the teacher helps parents understand how to organize learning at home, how to encourage, and how to give instructions.

3. Teacher's Interaction with Support Specialists

Who is part of the support team:

teacher-psychologist; teacher-defectologue (oligophrenopedagogue, speech therapist, sign language teacher, etc.); tutor; teacher's assistant; social educator; sometimes a medical worker or consultant from the PMPC.

Objectives of interaction: preparing an Individual Education Plan (IEP); adapting the educational program; conducting observations, diagnostics, and monitoring; correctional and developmental work with the child; providing parental support; and analyzing the success of the child's inclusion in the classroom.

Forms: meetings and consultations; exchange of information about results and difficulties; maintaining a general plan for correctional and developmental work; joint participation in lessons and activities; coordination of responsibilities (clarifying who is responsible for what).

It is important to clearly allocate responsibilities to avoid duplication and confusion.

Difficulties and Ways to Overcome Them

The main difficulties faced by teachers in an inclusive environment are related to insufficient training, limited resources, and high emotional stress. To overcome these problems, it is necessary to develop a system of methodological support for teachers, create professional interaction networks, and introduce mentoring practices. Positive examples of successful inclusion, which build teachers' self-confidence, also play an important role (Wade, Abrami, Poulsen & Chambers, 1995).

The Main Difficulties Faced by the Teacher

In the context of inclusive education, the teacher faces a number of specific and common problems that can be divided into several groups:

A. Psychological and pedagogical difficulties

Insufficient knowledge about typical and atypical features of children's development; difficulties in choosing teaching methods for children with disabilities; challenges in applying an individual approach in large classes; lack of motivation in students.

Ways to overcome: professional development (courses, webinars, seminars); consultations with specialists (psychologists, speech pathologists, speech therapists); use of adapted educational programs and differentiated approaches (Yasutake & Lerner, 1997); implementation of active learning methods, gaming, and visual technologies.

B. Communication difficulties

Challenges in interacting with parents, especially when they do not accept the child's diagnosis; difficulties communicating with children with speech, hearing, vision, or behavioral disorders; misunderstandings between teachers and other specialists (for example, tutors).

Ways to overcome: development of the teacher's communicative competence; forming a trusting relationship with the family; clear distribution of roles in the support team; using alternative or visual communication when necessary.

C. Organizational difficulties

Lack of tutors or assistants, inadequate conditions (equipment, adapted materials); teacher overload (documentation, individual plans, reports); insufficient time for individual work with children.

Ways to overcome: involving school administration in solving personnel and resource issues; rational time planning (*time management*); using digital and printed resources to adapt programs; requesting support from the PMPC or methodological service.

G. Emotional difficulties

Emotional burnout, stress, anxiety, professional fatigue, and feelings of failure — especially in the absence of quick results or lack of administrative and peer support.

Ways to overcome: psychological support (self-regulation training, communication with a psychologist); participation in professional communities and experience exchange; maintaining a balance between personal and professional life; administrative recognition of success and workload sharing.

2. General Coping Strategies

Key areas that help teachers overcome difficulties include continuous professional development, emotional resilience training, and building a supportive professional community.

Conclusions

Inclusive education seeks to promote personal development, social integration, and the overcoming of educational, psychological, physical, and social barriers. It is a system in which children with disabilities are not isolated but learn alongside their peers while receiving necessary support and adaptation.

A modern teacher is not merely a carrier of knowledge but an active participant in the educational process — ready to collaborate and work effectively in diverse learning environments, including inclusive settings. His or her competence is a key factor determining the quality of education.

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