Opinion of students-future inclusive teachers about preferable conceptions of inclusive education development: evidence from research in St. Petersburg

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Abstract

In this paper, we present the results of St. Petersburg students-future inclusive teachers’ questionnaire about preferable conceptions of inclusive education development in Russia. Data comes from two research in 2012 and 2015. Totally 359 student-future teachers in 2012 and 331 in 2015 were asked. The results show that students-future teachers’ opinion changed through two periods. In 2012 they preferred Western conception of inclusive education, while in 2015 Soviet Union experience was recognized as more successful. The parents’ opinion has become crucial and students-future teachers of inclusive education think that parents should be key actors in the decision-making process about education of their children with disabilities. The obtained results can help to prepare recommendations to the continuation of inclusive education reform in Russia and may be useful for the inclusive education reform in non-Western countries.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusive teachers, resistance to inclusive education reform, implementation of Western experience, Soviet correctional pedagogy, Russia

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Opinion of students-future inclusive teachers about preferable conceptions of inclusive education development: evidences of the research in São Petersburgo

Resumo


Palavras-chave: educação inclusiva, resistência à reforma da educação inclusiva, implementação da experiência ocidental, pedagogia correcional soviética, Rússia.

Resumen

En este artículo, presentamos los resultados del cuestionario aplicado a docentes de futuros profesores de San Petersburgo sobre concepciones preferibles del desarrollo de la educación inclusiva en Rusia. Los datos vienen de dos investigaciones en 2012 y 2015. Totalmente se ha preguntado a 359 futuros profesores en 2012 y 331 en 2015. Los resultados muestran que la opinión de los futuros profesores ha cambiado durante dos períodos. En 2012 preferían la concepción occidental de educación inclusiva, mientras en 2015 la experiencia de Unión Soviética se reconoció como más exitosa. La opinión de los padres se ha hecho crucial y los estudiantes – los futuros profesores de la educación inclusiva – creen que los padres deberían ser actores-clave en el proceso de toma de decisiones sobre la educación de sus hijos con discapacidad. Los resultados obtenidos pueden ayudar a preparar recomendaciones hacia la continuación de la reforma de la educación inclusiva en Rusia y pueden ser útiles para la reforma de la educación inclusiva en países no occidentales.

Palabras-clave: educación inclusiva, resistencia a la reforma de la educación inclusiva, implementación de la experiencia occidental, pedagogía correcional soviética, Rusia.
1. Introduction

In this paper, we present the results of St. Petersburg students-future inclusive teachers’ questionnaire about preferable conceptions of inclusive education development in Russia. Inclusive education is a process of joint education and training of all children, irrespective of physical, mental, intellectual and any other features in the general education system together with the contemporaries (ARTYUKHINA; CHUMAKOV; IVANOVA, 2016a,b; PAVENKOV; RUBTCOVA, 2016). A key feature of the Russian situation is the existence of its own system of work with children with special needs that is the system of correctional pedagogy, based on the creation of separate schools for special children (MALOFEEV, 2009). The correctional pedagogy system established in the Soviet era has a large number of supporters, while inclusive education is new for the Russian educational environment (ARTYUKHINA, 2006; PAVENKOV; PAVENKOV; RUBTCOVA, 2015).

The 2014 year brings the implementation of the new law “On Education in the Russian Federation” that proclaimed transition to inclusive education and closing of correctional schools. Attempts of reform of inclusive education led to protests of parents and teachers. Parents required a stopping of the reform of correctional schools education. Protests of parents and teachers in 2014 illustrate that there is a gap between optimistic expectation and actual events. Some kind of social communication was absent that can be cause of conflict (ZOTOV, 2011; VOLCHKOVA; PAVENKOV, 2002; USIAEVA et al., 2016; RUBTCOVA; VASILIIEVA, 2015). It means that an attempt quickly replaces the correctional education to inclusive education has led to the problem because it is a kind of institutional reform that needs time for development (PRUEL, 2011; RUBTCOVA, 2007, 2011; DRUZHININ, 2017; ENYGIN, 2013). The inclusive education system was not developed yet. Teachers and parents did not understand how it will work that is very important (see e.g. AVRAMIDIS; BAYLISS; BURDEN, 2000; AVRAMIDIS; NORWICH, 2002; RUBTCOVA; PAVENKOV, 2016; CHUMAKOV, 2010). Parents and teachers were afraid of losing a working system of Correctional pedagogy. Thus, active resistance caused not inclusive education, but the mechanism of its implementation (TIKHOMIROVA, 2013; KHITRYUK, 2014). It is a quite typical situation in Russia, when new reform is implementing without sufficient support (BALASHOV; SANINA, 2016; BONDALETVOV, V.V. et al., 2014; EL’MEEV; TARANDO, 1999; GASHKOV; RUBTSOVA, 2017; KOROTAIEVA; NAUMOVA, 2016).

Nine per cent of the population in Russia have some form of disability. This is 13 million people with special mental or intellectual, physical development, of varying degrees. These people should live in specially adapted conditions, which often require big support in education (SAMSONOVA, 2015). Now, we should again look into the advantages and disadvantages of both systems: inclusive and correctional pedagogy. It will allow defining more clearly, accurately the need, and the limits of implementation of inclusive education in Russia.

In current research, we had decided to ask opinion of students - future inclusive education about preferable ideas for the development of educational system for the children with disabilities. Many authors recognize that it is important to ask students because we should know their opinion about future profession (MANSUROV; YURCHENKO, 2016; RUBTCOVA, 2016; PEVNAIA; DIDKOVSKAYA, 2011), their values and ideals (LALVANI, 2013; PAVENKOV; SHMELEV; RUBTCOVA, 2016), develop their possibilities for reflective learning (COLOMER; PALLISERA; FULLANA et al., 2013; FULLANA; PALLISERA; COLOMERet al., 2016), their understanding how to be an inclusive teacher (OYLER; HAMRE, 2006), that can help in their future professional life (YENYGEN, 2011).

Thus, our objective is related to the education reform of correctional education and the initial phase of the implementation of inclusive education in Russia. It is the following: describing the opinion of students-future teachers about preferable conceptions of inclusive education development in Russia.

2. Theoretical background

According to Marx (1964), any action should be conceptually substantiated. These concepts are associated with the socio-economic interests of different groups. In accordance with this doctrine, we should describe the ba-
sic ideologies that supporters of inclusive education can adhere to and find out how many supporters each ideology has and what group can have trust to them (RUBTSOVA; VASILIEVA, 2016).

The identification of a concept is a rather complex process that appeals to several theories that we briefly enumerate. On the basis of Marx, there is an understanding that socio-economic factors determine the ideology (MARX, 1964). According to Karl Mannheim, ideology is necessary for any society. Ideology creates an action plan (MANNHEIM, 1994). Parsons believed that usually society consists with several subsystems. This position is the basis of his famous scheme of society as a system named AGIL (adaptation, goal-setting, integration, latency). Adaptation is a function of the economy, goal-setting is a function of politics, integration is a function of culture, and latency is a function of invisible social patterns. This in particular means that these systems can be ideologically different on the macro level (PARSONS, 1991). Based on the AGIL Parsons scheme, we can identify the following concepts:

1. political conception (goal-setting based on ideology, e.g. inclusive education gives to the Russians the possibility to be more closed with Europe under democratic ideology);
2. cultural conception (integration on the basis of common forms of culture, e.g. inclusive education can fit in Orthodox Church experience and Russian and Soviet traditions);
3. economic conception (adaptation based on economic benefits, e.g. inclusive education can give more personal for business);
4. multichoice conception (latency, since it actually produces latent patterns of behavior, e.g. parents can have a choice of correctional or inclusive education).

4. Results and Discussion

The research was devoted to the conception of further development of correctional/inclusive pedagogical system in Russia from students point of view. The first question was about the Western experience of inclusive education that was a popular idea among Russian social workers through many years (see Table 1).

3. Data and Methodology

Data comes from two research in 2012 and 2015. Totally 359 student-future teachers in 2012 and 331 in 2015 were asked. The questionnaire was electronic on the website, however all students were in their classes. They opened their gadgets, mobile phones or notebooks and went through electronical questionnaire that can be saved only if it is fully completed. In results, 276 full answers in 2012 and 269 in 2015 were received. It means that 23,12% of respondents in 2012 and 18,73% of respondents in 2015 preferred do not participate, did not compete full questionnaire or they have some technical problems with internet connection however preferred do not ask help. Therefore, we discussed these 276 full answers in 2012 and 269 in 2015.

All participants were asked to participate in the study and informed about the purpose and aims of the research. Participant consent to participate was gained. They were assured of the anonymity of their responses through the use of pseudonyms to report the results, and were guaranteed of the confidentiality of collected data. They allowed to use the data for the research and educational purposes. This study was conducted in accordance with the Professional Ethical Code of Sociologists by the Russian Society of Sociologists (RSS), informed consent form to the participants was not asked.

Table 1. Students’ answers on the question: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to include Western experience in the development of our educational system of children with disabilities»
As we can see, students’ opinion is two periods is different. In order to check the statistical significance of these differences we did T-Test that has shown p<0,001. Therefore, the differences are statistical significant. What are they? Students opinion in 2015 is less favorable to the Western experience: while 76,81% of students were agree (definitely and probably) in 2012, only 43,49% think so in 2016. At the same time the answers «it is difficult to say» are increased from 11,59% to 28,25% and the negative answers (definitely and probably) are also increased from 11,59% to 28,62% retrospectively. We can see that serious critics of Western experience doesn’t make all its previous supporters sure in its negative effect. It makes bigger the group of sceptics who cannot be sure and answered «It is difficult to say». It is the biggest grow of sceptics among all conceptions.

The second question was devoted to Soviet Union experience, is it useful now. After the Soviet Union collapse Soviet Union experience was understood as something wrong and antihumanistic during 10-15 years. However, this critics were lower in the 2000s. In Table 2 we can see recent changing opinion of students (Table 2).

Table 2. Students’ answers on the question: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to include Soviet Union experience in the development of our educational system of children with disabilities»

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
<td>16,38</td>
<td>27,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably yes</td>
<td>27,24</td>
<td>42,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>24,67</td>
<td>25,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>8,55</td>
<td>9,78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>7,93</td>
<td>4,83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We did T-Test that has shown p<0,001 that recognizes the statistical significance of differences between students’ answers in 2012 and 2015 years. Specifically students’ opinion in 2015 became more favorable to the Soviet Union experience: while 49,27% of students were agree (definitely and probably) in 2012, 69,14% think it in 2016. At the same time the answers «It is difficult to say» are decreased from 25% to 14,87% and the negative answers (definitely and probably) are also decreased from 25,72% to 15,98% in 2015 in comparison with 2012. If we compare results in Table 1 and Table 2, based on Russian experience it is possible to say that students have tendency to return to correctional (special) pedagogy instead of improvement of inclusive education according to the Western traditions.

Next question was devoted to Orthodox Church and/or other religious organizations’ experience. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students’ answers on the question: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to include Orthodox Church and/or other religious organizations’ experience in the development of our educational system of children with disabilities»

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
<td>29,91</td>
<td>33,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably yes</td>
<td>25,00</td>
<td>27,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>31,5</td>
<td>31,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>6,5</td>
<td>7,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>4,8</td>
<td>4,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We did T-Test that has shown p=0,328. It means that differences between students’ answers in 2012 and 2015 years are not statistically significant. Students are stable in the idea that Orthodox Church and/or other religious organizations’ experience is useful for education of children with disabilities: 54,3% of students were agree (definitely and probably) in 2012 and 56,1% in 2016. It is interesting that the amount of the answers «It is difficult to say» is also stable – 31,5% in 2012 and 31,2% in 2015.

After questions about historical and foreign conceptions, we ask a question about economical conception. Modern literature has focus on not only humanistic ideals but also return to the ideas of professional education and labor market adaptation and economic requirements
Therefore, we asked students: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to include labor market and business adaptation in our education of children with disabilities» (see Table 4).

Table 4. Students’ answers on the question: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to include labor market and business adaptation in the development of our educational system of children with disabilities»

T-Test has shown $p=0.056$. This is a very weak evidence against the null hypothesis ($p>0.05$) and we can say that there is no significant difference. However, we can see a little growth of the answers «Definitely yes» and «Probably yes» from 59.8% in 2012 to 65.9% in 2015. It is interesting that the answer «Definitely yes» has a very big priority and its increase from 42% in 2012 to 51.8% in 2015. It is the biggest result among all conceptions: a half of students are fully agree. At the same time, the answers «It is difficult to say» decreased from 19,9% in 2012 to 13,0% in 2015. Negative answers «Definitely yes» and «Probably yes» have got 20.3% in 2012 and 18.4% in 2015 retrospectively. The economic conception's support is stable and has a little tendency to growth. Despite it can look as contradiction if we compare these results with growth of Soviet Union conception of correctional pedagogy, because Soviet Union had no market economy (see e.g. KIVARINA, 2013). However, really it is not a contradiction because Soviet Union conception of correctional pedagogy includes serious concern about professional development of children with disabilities.

The last (but not the least) was the conception of multichoice experience. Its main idea is to give parents a choice. It was not popular in Soviet Union that was based on correctional pedagogy and in Modern Russia that promoted inclusive pedagogy 20 years. However, after new Law «About Education», parents protested against the closing of correctional schools. That’s why we firstly include this question in 2012-year questionnaire and then repeat in 2015. Table 5 shows a great growth of supporters of this conception among students (see Table 5).

Table 5. Students’ answers on the question: «Do you agree with the following sentence: We need to ask preferable choice of each parent of the pedagogical conception for his/her child(ren) with disabilities’ education»

T-Test that has shown $p<0.001$ that recognizes the statistical significance of differences between students’ answers in 2012 and 2015 years. Specifically students’ opinion in 2015 became more favorable to the multichoice conception for parents: while 44,2% of students were agree (definitely and probably) in 2012, already 73,2% think so in 2016. While there is a little changing in answers «Probably yes», we can see an almost three times grown in answer «Definitely yes». This grown was provided by decreases of answers «It is difficult to say» from 23,2% in 2012 to 12,3% in 2015 and negative answers (definitely and probably) from 32,6% in 2012 to 14,5% in 2015. So students think that despite ideas of Western/Soviet/Church/Labour Market influence parents should be the main stakeholder in this system and the choice of conception is their choice.

Thus, the results show that students-future teachers’ opinion about Western/Soviet experience changed through two periods. In 2012, students prefer Western conception of inclusive education, while in 2015 Soviet Union experience was recognized as more successful. Orthodox Church has traditional support and traditional critics: the answers «It is difficult to say» are also stable. At the same time in 2015 students prefer to listen to the opinion of parents. The parents’ opinion has become crucial and students - future teachers of inclusive education think
that parents should be key actors in decision-making process about education of their children with disabilities. The another important idea is the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labor market, as confirmed by studies in other countries (see e.g. Pallisera; Vila; Valls, 2003); it has a little grown. The obtained results can help to prepare recommendations to the continuation of inclusive education reform in Russia and may be useful for the inclusive education reform in non-Western countries.

Notas


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