ON THE FACTORS AND CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The article analyses the results of the study concerning the specificity of socialisation processes of younger students with intellectual disability studying in the conditions of inclusive and special education. Within the framework of the study implemented with the support of RFBR (research project No 18-013-00861), in order to test the hypothesis concerning the specificity of socialisation processes of primary school students with intellectual disabilities when studying in different conditions, a diagnostic involving the usage of a set of techniques aimed at both studying the characteristics of children and at studying the individual characteristics of the social situation of development. The analysis of the results of the study of separate social competence components shows that students in the conditions of inclusion, compared to their peers, students of correctional schools, are characterised by less pronounced manifestations of social maladjustment and more harmonious family relationships, however, there are difficulties in recognising the emotional state of other people, insufficient ability to navigate adequately in typical life situations, contradictory trends in the formation of self-image and a number of other negative features of psychosocial development, presumably due to the specificity of social experience. The obtained results constituted the basis for conclusion about the significance of special correctional and developmental work when educating children with intellectual disabilities in the conditions of inclusion which is aimed at creating conditions necessary for successful socialisation of a child with disabilities. The results of the study allowed formulate a conceptual model of psychological and pedagogical support of students in the conditions of inclusion, which involves the implementation of correctional and developmental (training), advisory and preventive activities in relation to various participants of the educational environment (teachers, parents, students with normative development and children with disabilities).

Keywords: socialisation, social adaptation, students with intellectual disabilities, inclusive education, social competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creation of optimal conditions for successful social development, social adaptation, socialisation of the child, regardless of the level of his psychophysical development is the object of significant attention. Due to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the educational space, the development of potential of children with intellectual disabilities, their cognitive activity and personality in general, preparation and their engagement
as full members of society is one of the priorities of all education levels. The degree of the issue is determined by steady increase in the number of children with special educational needs.

Modern educational standards and basic adapted educational programs for children with special educational needs provide not only the formation of their system of knowledge, experience and relationships but also of social competence which is an essential precondition for integration of these students into society (Kozina and Borisova, 2019, pp 1055-1057). However, many researchers note that success in the psychosocial development of a child with intellectual disabilities is much easier to achieve within the system of special education substantiating it by both the need for the organisation of correctional work in secondary school (Indenbaum, 2010, p. 73-80) and lack of readiness for its implementation from teachers (Danilova, 2017, pp. 62-67).

Socialisation involves not only a certain level of labour adaptation but also the ability to navigate in the environment complying with certain rules and standards of behavior. In this regard, the task to form the social competence of children with disabilities is on the forefront now.

The component breakdown of social competence is studied by many authors. For example, T. N. Zakharova, characterising the social competence of preschool age child, identifies the following components: motivational component (need for social approval and desire to take a certain place among the people of importance for the child); cognitive component (ideas about the world, about the features of people relationship in society); behavioural component (directly communicative, determining the adequate behaviour of the child in society, i.e. effective interaction with the environment and the ability to act according to socially accepted norms); emotional component (ability to understand and express one's feelings and emotions, ability to handle emotions of others properly) (Zakharova, pp. 113-117). V. V. Serova, characterising the social competence of children with mild intellectual disabilities, suggests considering the following components: cognitive (knowledge of standards of behaviour, means of joint activities, ways to resolve problem situations, evaluation of personal qualities and children's peers, understanding the internal causes of actions and relationships); emotional (abilities and skills to perceive the peer as an equivalent personality, focus on his emotional states, desires, interests; emotional identification with the state of the peer; displays of positive emotions, prosocial behaviour in relationships with people around); behavioural (objective assessment of oneself and the peer, control of one's own behavior and emotions, capacity for role behavior).

The defect structure of intellectual disorders is often characterised by a weak differentiation of the emotional field, an insufficient ability to recognise and describe one's emotions and the emotions of other people. Such characteristics inevitably hamper the socialisation and assimilation of social experience processes. New emphasis in the context of this problem is put in connection with an increasing trend of the introduction of an inclusive approach in education, as currently children with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, have the opportunity to study both in special (correctional) and in secondary schools.

2. METHODS

Within the framework of the study implemented with the support of RFBR (research project No 18-013-00861), in order to test the hypothesis concerning the specificity of socialisation processes of primary school students with intellectual disabilities when studying in different conditions, a diagnostic involving the usage of a set of techniques aimed at both studying the characteristics of children and at studying the individual characteristics of the social situation of development. The study sample consisted of 90 primary school students enrolled in inclusive (group 1) and special education (group 2), including children with mild intellectual disability (group 1 – 52.4%, group 2 – 66.7%) and children with moderate intellectual disability and severe multiple impairments in development, with 50% of group 1 and 65% of group 2 being students of the 1st and 2nd grades. The study involved 29 representatives of teaching staff: 13 teachers of secondary schools and 16 teachers of special (correctional) schools, where children with intellectual disabilities study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results of the study of separate social competence components shows that students in the conditions of inclusion, compared to their peers, students of correctional schools, are characterised by less pronounced manifestations of social maladjustment and more harmonious family relationships, however, there are difficulties in recognising the emotional state of other people, insufficient ability to navigate adequately in typical life situations, contradictory trends in the formation of self-image and a number of other negative features of psychosocial development, presumably due to the specificity of social experience.

In particular, it was revealed that the students in the conditions of inclusion are characterised by indicators
reflecting adequate self-esteem, while students of special schools demonstrate traditionally inflated self-esteem. At the same time, the analysis of the distribution of self-esteem level indicators within each group identifies the presence of a significant number of students with low self-esteem (from 15 to 40% on separate scales) in the group of students in the conditions of inclusion, while students of special schools almost do not fall into this range. The lowest values of self-esteem on the scale of "have friends — no friends", suggests in this case not so much the adequacy of the I-concept, as a reflection of the complexities of interaction with the outside world.

Assessment of the level of general awareness, the ability to formulate conclusions based on the rules and regulations shows that, with the lack of knowledge about the environment typical for the subjects of both groups, students in the conditions of inclusion significantly differ from their peers from special schools in respect of their ability to navigate adequately in fairly typical life situations. Significantly lower indicators for this parameter of students in the conditions of inclusion (p=0.001) reflect their lack of social experience which, as a rule, is based on the image of the real experience.

At the same time, the results of the study of the ability to recognise emotional states of people in different situations of interpersonal interaction, consistent with the generally accepted ideas about the insufficiency of these skills in children with intellectual disabilities, reflect special problems inherent to inclusive education students. Based on the results of observation, students of special schools demonstrated a higher level of development of the capacity for empathy as the ability to perceive and analyse the emotional state of interpersonal interaction participants. The analysis of diagnostic results reflects a more pronounced lack of ability to understand the inner world of other people, the ability to decentralise, capacity for interpretation of the causes of other person's behaviour, ability to put yourself in the other's position, to anticipate the reaction of others to their actions appropriate to children enrolled in the conditions of inclusion.

The identified trends assume particular importance in the context of indicators of students’ social adaptation which was assessed based on the Stott observation map comprising 16 symptom complexes including a list of sample symptoms of maladjusted behaviour. The comparative analysis of mean values for each of the symptom complexes reflects the less pronounced manifestations of maladjustment indicators inherent to the students in the conditions of inclusion. The influence of the specificity of social situation of development on the success of socialisation processes of mentally retarded students was noted in other studies (Borisova, Shalaeva, and Kozina, 2015, pp. 155-160). However, the correlation analysis of social adaptation indicators and emotional component of social competence allows to detect various structures of interrelations appropriate to students in different conditions. The analysis of the group of children studying in the conditions of inclusion identified contradictory interrelations of the indicators under study in respect of their content. The more accessible are the perception and analysis of the emotional state of the communication partner, anticipation of the course of situation and its evaluation to the child, the more pronounced are the symptoms of anxiety about the reception by other children, anxiety, lack of confidence as regards the interest from peers. Meanwhile, the lower rates of emotional development are matched by more visible manifestations of care and avoidance of contact. Thus, on the one hand, insufficient formation of social competence components in schoolchildren leads to avoidance of contacts, but on the other hand, relatively more developed skills do not contribute to the achievement of social adaptation either.

Since intellectual disabilities are marked by the change in the social situation of the child's development representing the system of relations with the immediate environment, the individual characteristics of child-parent relations were studied. The parents of the children studying in the conditions of inclusion demonstrated a more positive integral emotional attitude to the child, a greater ability to accept him respecting his individuality, approving his interests and plans. This group is predominated by the socially desirable image of parental attitude (cooperation) manifesting in encouragement of independence and initiative, interest and trust. The parents of the group of special schools students demonstrate a lower level of acceptance and respect for the child, are more inclined to infantilise children, perceiving them maladjusted, unfortunate, to emphasise their personal and social failure, keep them under strict control. The students of special schools are equally represented by full (50.9) and single-parent families (49.1), three quarters of students in conditions of inclusion (73%) are brought up in full families.

In order to identify the self-assessment of teachers' competence in socialising students with intellectual underdevelopment, a questionnaire was used allowing to obtain the picture of how teachers assess their competence in various types of teaching activities. General education schools teachers demonstrate a lack of competence to implement an inclusive approach effectively, thereby facing a wider range of problems in their teaching activities than their special schools counterparts. For them, the difficulty is both the activity related to the formation of socially significant qualities in children with intellectual underdevelopment and the
organisation of educational activities of this category of students. Teachers of mainstream schools working in conditions of inclusion, perceive the difficulties associated with the work on the formation of socially significant qualities in students with intellectual disabilities in a less differentiated manner than teachers of special schools. It is also noteworthy that teachers of mainstream schools experience difficulties in almost all areas of this activity, whereas most teachers of special schools define particular aspects of this work as the most complicated ones. Of special note is the fact that teachers of both general education and special schools attribute little importance to such components as the presence of ideas about the ways to form socially significant qualities in general and, in particular, possession of techniques of creating appropriate social situations.

The insufficient level of teachers’ competence in this type of activity is a factor reducing the chances of successful socialisation of these students in the conditions of inclusive education. The diversity of the issue concerning socialisation of children with disabilities requires professional qualification of the teacher to solve problems in various fields, the formation of professional competencies in the work aimed at socialisation of children with intellectual disabilities, mastering the content designed to form social experience of students.

4. CONCLUSION

The obtained results constituted the basis for conclusion about the significance of special correctional and developmental work when educating children with intellectual disabilities in the conditions of inclusion which is aimed at creating conditions necessary for successful socialisation of a child with disabilities. That said, an isolated impact which solves correctional and developmental tasks and proves a positive momentum around the formation of emotional component of social competence may not be effective enough in solving the issue of socialisation of students. The identified trends confirm the need not only for the implementation of correctional and pedagogical work designed to solve the problems of social adaptation, but also the mandatory organisation of psychological and pedagogical support of students in the conditions of inclusion. The conditions necessary for successful socialisation of a child with disabilities should include not so much corrective work aimed at the traditional overcoming of the detected shortcomings but at the creation of a specially organised inclusive educational space encompassing all subjects of the educational environment. The results of the study allowed to modify the diagnostic unit and formulate a conceptual model of psychological and pedagogical support of students in the conditions of inclusion, which involves the implementation of correctional and developmental (training), advisory and preventive activities in relation to various participants of the educational environment (teachers, parents, students with normative development and children with disabilities).

In the process of developing the model it was taken into consideration that life competences constitute a multicomponent education comprising a set of knowledge and ideas of the child about the objects and phenomenon of reality, as well as the ways of action with them; skills and abilities of practical and operative application of the acquired knowledge in solving specific life problems; experience of using the acquired knowledge and skills in everyday life; the ability to expand knowledge and form new skills. The development of social competence as a condition of successful socialisation involves coordinated work designed to solve the problems of three levels associated with the formation of cognitive, activity and reflexive components. The implementation of this approach is possible with the provision of coordinated activities of all subjects of the educational environment which is reflected in the developed conceptual model of psychological and pedagogical support of students. The model comprises, apart from correctional and developmental work with children and consultations for parents, the organisation of joint activities of students, training and advisory support of teachers in respect of the problems of formation of children's communication experience, cooperation in simulated situations of social experience both in extracurricular and in class activities which will solve the problem of formation of life competence as an integrative result of education.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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