

Inclusion and Inclusive Education: Interpretation Conflict

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The study is dedicated to critical consideration of the inclusion strategy and the inclusive education system in relation to the process of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Russia.

Methods/Statistical Analysis: The theory of functional analysis of R. Merton was used as a principal methodological basis. Official statistical data from the Internet were used as the information source. Analytical procedures to study the purchasing powers of disabled persons in different historical periods were carried out employing the method of comparative analysis.

Findings: In view of the common effort to improve the efficiency of educating persons with disabilities, the suggestions of the authors are as follows: a) inclusion should be considered as a process of including the “non-typical” social groups and subjects into the “typical” community on the condition that rule out any kind of discrimination; b) inclusive social strategy should be built on principles declared in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; c) inclusive strategy in education, common for the entire educational system, should be developed; d) inclusive higher educational institutions should be specialized by categories, based on the availability of infrastructural, social-structural and social-cultural conditions for educating a particular category of persons with disabilities. **Applications/Improvements:** The results and recommendations can be applied in the Russian education system development strategies and are of significant interest to Russian scientific and educational thought.

Keywords: Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Inclusive Educational Strategy, Social Barriers

1. Introduction

A term “inclusion”, quite fashionable nowadays, is ubiquitous in the scientific communities of experts in sociology and humanities. It is most popular among the representatives of psychology, pedagogy, sociology and those of the special branches of the abovementioned sciences, which are in this or another way associated with educating and up-bringing persons with disabilities. This fact is confirmed by the large number of conferences, dedicated to inclusive education, by opening the centers of inclusive education in the higher education institutions and in the secondary special education institutions in

this country, by the professional development courses, focused on training the professional and teaching staff in the competences required for implementing the inclusive education, etc. All mentioned above makes it possible to maintain that both scientists of different profiles and the administrators of different levels do comprehend in full now, that the issue of educating and employing the people with disabilities is one of the key problems in our society nowadays.

2. Literature Review

Today the problem of educating persons with disabilities

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occupies one of the leading positions in Russian educational sociology and is considered by Russian scientists in several basic aspects. The first direction concerns educating children and teenagers with disability. The representatives of this school Yu. T. Matasov, L. I. Aksyonova¹ and others analyze the working experience of special educational institutions. The second direction is represented by the studies considering the issues of the higher education of persons with disabilities. The authors working in this direction, such as N. V. Borisova², Ye. V. Kulagina³, N. N. Malofeyev⁴, cover different aspects of forming the personality of a disabled student. Especially popular here are the investigations of Saratov sociological school: Ye. R. Yarskaya-Smirnova, E. K. Naberushkina and others. The investigations under the aegis of the Union of Rectors of Russia⁵ are also of no small importance; the scientific experience in overcoming social barriers accumulated by the higher educational institutions is studied profoundly.

Foreign literature sources usually pay attention to the following issues: managing the systems in the social sphere;⁶ specific features of disabled persons' care;⁷ child disability;⁸ issues of social and historical construction of disability models⁹, prospects for developing the social sphere.¹⁰

Among the most significant authors in the context of this study the following authors should be noted: I. Goffman¹¹, D. Hall and T. Tinklin¹², whose works have been translated in Russian. Some particular investigative provisions of such foreign authors as S. Kohl and K. Paerly¹³ also proved to be quite useful for this study.

Analyzing the degree of the problem development, the scientific creative works of classical authors of sociology could by no means be omitted: the educational system is analyzed in this study in the context of functional theory of R. Merton and J. Alaxarand.

3. Method

The theory of functional analysis of R. Merton was used as a principal methodological basis. Official statistical data from the Internet were used as the information sources. Analytical procedures to study the purchasing powers of disabled persons in different historical periods were carried out employing the method of comparative analysis.

4. Results

Boiling activity, deployed in Russia to implement the so-

called strategy of inclusive education, has, as a notorious coin does, two sides to it, namely, the "white" and the "black" ones.

Let us start with the "white" side. Of course, attracting the attention of the community to the needs of persons with disabilities or, in plain words, to the needs of the invalids, is quite a favorable factor both for the disabled people themselves and for the community as a whole. Invalids, being in focus of scientists, managers, teachers and other agents of their day-to-day activity obtain the possibility to reveal their personal and professional potentials to a considerably larger degree, to bring the typical community closer to understanding their special needs, to broaden their communication circle and so on. On the other hand, the dominant community, under the conditions of effective inclusion, engages into its functional activity a great number of new members, who used to be segregated earlier, but are fully functional now, thus broadening the communication boundaries and obtaining the experience of interacting with the people of unique biographical circumstances. Strategy of inclusive education (and, in more general terms, the inclusive social strategy) is called upon for creating the "society of equals", where a disabled person has the same amount of vectors for potential self-development, as a healthy man does.

However, this idyll is a matter for the future. Let us hope, of not a very distant future, but still, of the future. We still have to overcome a great number of the so-called "barriers", which will be discussed later.

Now let us consider the "black" side of the coin. Its essence can be expressed in just one sentence: no one of those who take part in implementing the inclusive education strategy has clear and unambiguous understanding of what this inclusive education strategy is about. It should be noted here, that we do not mean that the community of scientists and administrators are totally incompetent in those issues. Rather, on the contrary, practically everyone has one's own vision (social paradigm) of what we all together should do to implement the inclusive social strategy, this paradigm often being quite comprehensive in scientific terms. However, such variety of paradigms in social engineering principles is of no help to the common objective, but, quite the opposite, it makes all titanic efforts nil and void, if not to say that it brings about negative results. In order not to make unsubstantiated statements, consider some statistics.

Assuming the axiom that the "super task" of the inclusive social strategy is to create the community of

Table 1. Comparison of the segregation strategy results with those of the modern inclusive strategy

Segregation strategy (USSR, 1988-1989)			Inclusive strategy (Russia, 2014-2015)		
Pension, disability group I (rubles)	Pension, disability group II (rubles)	Income, average per capita (rubles)	Pension, disability group I (thousand rubles)	Pension, disability group II (thousand rubles)	Income, average per capita (thousand rubles)
85	70	153	11.621	7.009	27.887
Ratio, disability pension to average income (%)					
56	46		41	25	

equal opportunities, the quotient of a disabled person's financial means, as compared to the ones of an "average" citizen (including the citizens with disability, as is implied by the inclusive strategy) will be one of the most important indicators. Based on this indicator, compare the results of the segregation strategy, implemented in the USSR, with those of the modern inclusive strategy (see Table 1).

Thus, the disability pensions in 1989 made 85 rubles for group I and 70 rubles for group II.¹⁴ An average income per capita in 1988 amounted to 153 rubles per month¹⁴. The pensions of group I disabled persons made up circa 56% of the average income level, those of group II amounted to 46%. April, 2015: disability pension (taking into account monthly payments – MP) amounted in the first group to 11621 rubles, in the second group to 7009 rubles¹⁵. Average income per capita, according to the data for the third quarter of 2014 amounted to 27887 rubles¹⁶. Compare. The first group disabled persons get the pension, which amounts to 41% of the average income; the second group disabled persons get 25%. Obviously, the purchasing powers of the first group disabled person in relation to an "average person" in the inclusive Russian strategy is by 27% lower than his/her purchasing powers in the segregation soviet strategy; moreover, in the second group this indicator is almost two times lower, that is 46%. And all this does not account for the soviet social package, not available for a Russian disabled person (almost all of it has been included in the pension as a result of monetization in 2005).

Here it would be appropriate to mention that under the inclusion conditions a person with disability has the opportunity of employment and of receiving extra wage and salary income. However, first, this opportunity existed in the soviet period as well, but it was realized within the segregation establishments; second, the share of the employed invalids in modern Russia amounts to 4.6% of their total number¹⁷. That is, less than one twentieth of Russian disabled persons earn their living and add

extra income to their pension by themselves. For the rest, the pension remains the basic source of income. A paradoxical conclusion suggests itself: in part, associated with the financial means of the disabled people the Soviet segregation system was much closer to the objective of the inclusion, namely, to creating the society of equal opportunities, than the system, created on the basis of the modern inclusive social strategy, which is being so actively implemented at all levels of Russian state and social policy.

Here it might look like the very idea of inclusion is criticized; however, this is not the case. Actually, we agree with it unconditionally and support it by all our efforts: as is well known, Moscow State University of Humanities and Economics, the authors of this study being the associates thereof, is, as of today, the only higher education institution in Russia with the status of the inclusive one. Let us be reminded, that the issue under consideration is different: namely, whether we, the community of all to whom the idea of inclusion really matters, have a common understanding of the essence of this idea. To the best of our belief, we do not. As a result, so far we have not been able to develop a unified efficient strategy to implement the idea of inclusion. And, as a particular consequence, to which this study is directly related, we have not developed even a unified educational strategy to facilitate implementing the idea of inclusion. The listed factors, together with some other factors, result in the fact that this desirable inclusive societal environment, the community of equal opportunities, still remains to be just an idea, understood differently by different people. In practice, social paradoxes similar to the one illustrated above, use to happen.

5. Discussion

Following the Russian classical investigation algorithm, suggesting a sequential consideration of such questions

as “Who is to blame?” and “What should be done?”, we believe, that the first question has been covered and the current variety of paradigms “is to blame”.

Now we proceed with the question “What should be done?” And here, first of all, strict limitations have to be put to the epistemological framework of this study. As an object we consider the inclusion of those disabled people, who suffer from diseases related to the support-motor system disorders. No other abnormalities are touched upon. The subject is meant to be the system of continuous multilevel education of the category of persons under study. The result of the study is intended to be represented by formulation of meaningful attributes of the system of continuous multilevel inclusive education of disabled persons suffering from support-motor system disorders.

Understanding, that it is not possible to achieve such an objective without giving preliminary definitions to the basic ideas, those definitions are given in this section.

The key category of this study is *disability*. In the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities it is understood as an evolutionary idea and is defined as a result of interaction, occurring between the people with health disorders and the relational and environmental barriers, which prevents them from full and effective participation in the life of the community on a par with the others¹⁸. Here, it should be noted at once, disability is understood as a social, not physical, phenomenon. It should also be kept in mind that the problem of disability, representing the result of interaction of people who have health disorders, with the relational and environmental barriers, is de-actualized (eliminated) in its social terms, as soon as the specified barriers are eliminated.

In line with the definition of disability, the Convention defines a *disabled person* as a person with stable physical, psychical, intellectual or sensing disorders, which, interacting with different barriers can interfere with full and effective participation in the life of the community on a par with others.¹⁸

Other key category in this study is the category of inclusion. The idea of *inclusion* is supposed to mean the process of including the “non-typical” social groups and subjects (in our case, persons suffering from the support-motor system disorders) into the “typical” community under the conditions which rule out any discrimination. Discrimination means any difference, exclusion or preference, causing prohibition or predicaments in enjoying the rights equally¹⁴. Thus, the purpose of inclusion is to overcome the barriers, which prevent the non-typical groups from “full and effective participation”

in social life “on par with others”¹⁸. In other words, the objective of inclusion is to level the non-typical nature factor in all spheres of communal functions. It should be understood that this objective possesses the features of an ideal benchmark, and its full and comprehensive implementation would require creating the perfect, in some relevant terms, social environment. In specified sense the objective of inclusion is achievable to that very degree to which a perfect society is possible. Consequently, inclusion comes forth as a kind of a general principle, establishing the basis for a set of particular principles, reflected in the relevant article of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, namely:

- respect to the dignity intrinsic to a human, his personal self-reliance, including the freedom to make his own choice, and independence;
- absence of discrimination;
- full and effective engagement and inclusion in the community;
- respect to the peculiarities of the disabled persons and accepting such peculiarities as a component of human diversity and a part of mankind;
- equal opportunities;
- accessibility;
- equality between men and women;
- respect to the developing abilities of disabled children and respect to the right of disabled children to preserve their individuality.¹⁸

Thus, in actual social engineering activity, focused on creating the inclusive environment, the abovementioned principles should be taken as guidelines and be put in the basis of the inclusive social strategy.

Inclusive social strategy (ISS) is aimed at realizing the objective of the inclusion. ISS suggests that, in contrast to the segregation and the integration strategy, the whole social environment should be transformed, not just a part thereof (institution, office, etc.). The difference of the segregation, the integration and the inclusive social strategies is based on the fundamental principles, attributable to them:

- for the segregation social strategy the effort to exclude a disabled person from general social context is characteristic, which is implemented by establishing the segregation institutions, specialized in treatment, education and employment of persons with disabilities, by creating the limited access areas, dedicated specifically for disabled persons;
- the integration social strategy suggests that a disabled person should be partially included in general social context; within the framework of non-specialized

institutions the specialized sub-divisions are established, where the communities of invalids are concentrated: specialized classes, groups, shops, departments etc. At that, in such kind of sub-divisions the accessible space environment is arranged. The key difference between the integration and the segregation strategy is that in the latter case a social and communicational field is opened for a disabled person, facilitating his "typical" socialization;

- ISS is pursuing an objective of including a disabled person in all the spheres of communal functions completely without any spatial, social-structural and social-cultural localization. The difference of ISS from the integration social strategy is that under conditions of ISS the persons with support-motor system disorders obtain the possibility to be included in the communities of the typical persons without any restrictions, directly caused by their being non-typical.

ISS is implemented in three interrelated spheres: spatial, social-structural and social-cultural.

ISS in social-structural sphere is focused on overcoming the barriers, which are stipulated by some systematic characteristics of the social environment in any manner whatsoever. The determinants of such barriers are represented by legislative, administrative and other forms of discrimination, associated with being non-typical.

In social-cultural sphere ISS has an objective of overcoming communicational barriers, based on stigmatization and self-stigmatization of the persons with disabilities, as well as on other social and political determinants.

Considering persons with special needs the spatial barriers should be mentioned separately which, on the face of it, are of natural, not of social character. However, notwithstanding their physical character, the spatial barriers affect both social-structural and social-cultural aspects of social life directly and, therefore, ISS performs such a technical function while solving the proper social issues.

One more important characteristic, which ISS has to possess, is overall involvement in its implementation. The subjects (the sources of social transformational activity) of the inclusive social strategy should be represented by the state, by typical and by non-typical persons. This seemingly obvious prerequisite is not fully understood by all actors engaged in ISS due to different reasons. The most frequent deviation from it is associated with the fact that the disabled persons perceive themselves and are perceived by the community of typical persons and by the state as passive objects of ISS (in developing this

study an investigation has been performed consisting of a series of informal interviews, in the course of which the representatives of professional and teaching staff of Moscow State University of Humanities and Economics (MSUHE), the students of MSUHE, with and without disabilities, and also the people not directly related to MSUHE and to investigating the strategy of inclusion were interviewed). Some characteristic opinions associated with this kind of perception are as follows: "Disabled people should not work, they should be fully supported by the government" (a person who does not have regular contacts with a disabled person), "A disabled person is my profession. I get paid for it" (student of MSUHE, first group invalid). Another deviation from the mindset of overall involvement, characteristic for the state and for the "healthy" part of community implies the attempt to "take care" of disabled persons. Here, quite a subtle nuance is important: the difference between the assistance in self-realization and the care properly. The care is usually taken of those who are not able of taking care of themselves, but those who, due to current circumstances, require support in realizing some activities, are those, who are assisted. Assistance facilitates inclusion; care prevents it by maintaining the stigmas of helplessness and uselessness of a disabled person.

The requirement of overall involvement in implementing ISS is directly stipulated by another important characteristic: the meta-institutional character. In other words, the logics of inclusion suggests that its principle should be adhered to by all subjects of ISS in all social institutions without any exceptions, whether they are economical institutions, political or ideological institutions. Implementing the inclusive strategy in a separate social institute is not possible: if the inclusive values are not formed, for example, in the institution of the family in the course of initial socialization, then their formation within the framework of educational institutions, where the subjects undergo the second stage of socialization, is complicated by the lack of a proper world-view basis; the interaction between typical and non-typical persons in the course of further professional activity becomes even more complicated. And this is true for the whole institutional system. Understanding the institutional character of ISS, the investigations are focused on one of the most important institutions, where it is implemented, namely, on the institution of education.

Inclusive educational strategy (IES) is an element of the inclusive social strategy, its implementation within the

framework of educational institutions. The objective of IES is to introduce the principles inclusion in the system of education at all its levels from primary up to the higher education, creating the system of inclusive education.

Inclusive education (IE) is a result of implementing the inclusive educational strategy effectively. The objective, not the process, of IE is represented by the educational system customized for the special needs of disabled persons, which makes it possible for this category of persons to master the educational programs in full without getting excluded from the social context with all the associated consequences: competitive power of non-typical persons at the labor market, their adequate professionally oriented socialization, etc.

Referring to the officially accepted definition of IE as the provision of the equal access to education for all students, accommodating the variety of special educational needs and individual capabilities,¹⁹ two interrelated meaningful characteristics can be identified, which are imbedded in the idea of IE by the authors of Federal Law: first, the provision of equal access to education is considered; second, the variety of educational needs and individual capabilities have to be taken into account. The study is focused on this definition because it often becomes a “stumbling block” today, which divides the opinions in the communities of those who are not indifferent to the issue of inclusion.

Equal access to education is often treated as an equal access to educational institutions, from which follows that all educational institutions in the Russian Federation should be adapted to the special needs of the disabled people, suffering from all possible disorders without any exceptions. Is it possible to implement such strategy? As of April, 2014, according to the preliminary results, discussed in the report by O.N. Smirnov,²⁰ about 8% of educational institutions for professional and higher education have been customized to special needs of the disabled persons. No updated information has been discovered. In any event, it appears that IES, in part, related to professional education, by 2014 has been implemented by 8% only. But, even assuming that each and every one will proceed with solving this issue, and that in the end we shall come to the situation when every Russian educational organization will be capable of teaching all types of disabled persons in all disciplines together with their healthy co-students, which is assumed by the analyzed interpretation of the inclusive education, then the question arises, whether it is practicable, when there are specialized educational institutions already in operation, which have already

accumulated considerable experience in educating the disabled persons. If the expression “equal access to education” is to be understood as equality in selecting the educational programs, not the institutions, then IES can be implemented at considerably lower costs and within much shorter period by means of, for example, increasing the number of training disciplines in already existing specialized higher education institutions, by establishing new base inclusive higher education institutions, which will jointly cover all training disciplines in federal districts. At that, all principles of inclusion will be adhered to, but the schedule and the expenses for ISO implementation will be saved substantially.

Considering the necessity to account for the variety of the educational needs and individual capabilities, our community does not always unambiguously understand this quite clear definition. Inclusive education does necessarily take into account the individual capabilities, with which, obviously, the special needs should be associated, defining the disabilities of these particular students. But the special needs of disabled persons are considerably different depending on the character of the disorder, and it is quite complicated, expensive and it would take long to accommodate the infrastructure of all educational institutions to all special needs of persons suffering from all types of disorders. However, the staff of the educational institutions should be adapted as well: special social services should be established in all organizations, the personnel of the educational institutions should be trained to work with disabled persons, etc. Finally, as of today, there are no pedagogical methodology, which would enable effective simultaneous teaching of the persons with vision and hearing disorders, those suffering from support-motor system disorder and the healthy persons in one and the same class in one and the same educational program. Should such pedagogical customization and staff adaptation in the educational institutions be rejected, and should only spatial measures be adopted (which is, by the way, a far-fetched assumption so far) and if the students with disabilities are “dissolved” among the typical students, then the barriers between the typical and non-typical ones would not only fail to be leveled, but they would become aggravated and they would take many new shapes, unknown and unpredictable as yet. Given all mentioned above, it is suggested that the base educational institutions, deploying the inclusive education strategy, should be specialized and customized based not only on spatial principle, but in accordance with the character of disorders as well.

6. Conclusion

We are convinced that even within a midterm prospective the common understanding of the essence of the inclusive education will enable creating the inclusive educational environment in a scale meeting the modern social requirements. In this case, a consensus of understanding has to be obtained, which would make it possible, combining the general efforts, to avoid extremes in implementing the inclusive educational strategy: between simple “dissolution” of the unprepared disabled students in the environment, focused on typical education, and their segregation there is a “middle way”, the concept of which is submitted in this study for consideration and further improvement. This way will enable adapting the historically established system of interaction between the disables persons and the typical community without eliminating the constructive elements, which already exist within it.

7. Recommendations

Given all mentioned above and in view of the common effort to improve the efficiency of educating persons with disabilities, the suggestions are as follows:

- inclusion should be considered as a process of including the “non-typical” social groups and subjects into the “typical” community on the condition that rule out any kind of discrimination;
- inclusive social strategy should be built on principles declared in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- inclusive strategy in education, common for the entire educational system, should be developed;
- inclusive higher educational institutions should be specialized by categories, based on the availability of infrastructural, social-structural and social-cultural conditions for educating a particular category of persons with disabilities.

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