

RESEARCH OF THE PROBLEMS OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Dr. Lubov Pryadko, Assoc. Prof.

Sumy Regional Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education (Ukraine)

Prof. Dr. Svitlana Myronova

Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University (Ukraine)

Abstract. Professional support for teachers plays a crucial role in the implementation of inclusive education. In the study, the concept of “professional support for teachers” refers to the existence of close social ties between the administration (school principal and his deputies), colleagues, parents of children with SEN, and teachers of postgraduate pedagogical education institutions, who are the main resource for professional support. The aim of the study was to identify current problems of professional support for teachers of inclusive education in a general secondary education institution. It is established that the administration of the institution is mainly interested in the formation of additional competencies of teachers. The problems in which teachers need professional support are identified, in particular: increasing incentives to work with children with SEN; involving special educators in the provision of correctional and developmental services; providing funding for institutions to create an inclusive educational environment; conducting educational work with parents to form adequate expectations of their children; providing teachers with practical advice on minimizing unwanted behavior and modifying educational material for children with intellectual difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. It was found that the activity and motivation of parents of children with SEN to cooperate plays an exceptional role in providing support to teachers.

Keywords: professional support for teachers; a child with special educational needs; inclusive education; institute of postgraduate education; advanced training courses

Introduction

Pedagogical support for teachers in solving educational problems is not only stress relief, but also a kind of training in a real-life situation. The vast majority of

modern teachers work in difficult conditions, making efforts to involve all children in the educational process without exception. The analysis of literary sources has proved that all over the world the work of teachers is devoted to ensuring the right to education of all children, including children with special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as children with SEN).

The practice of modern education shows that modern teachers have professional burnout, the presence of various forms of borderline psychological pathology and psychosomatic disorders, and situations of “pedagogical confusion”. Such manifestations cause conflicts in professional and pedagogical activities, misunderstandings, exhaustion, and ultimately lead to a decrease in the level of professional activity. Since inclusion is a dynamic process, teacher support is also a flexible process that needs to be relevant to the present. Researchers – Khaleel, N., Alhosani, M., Duyar I. (2021); Miesera, S., Gebhardt, M. (2018); Perrin, A.L., Jury, M., Desombre, C. (2021); Saloviita, T. (2020) found that teachers need a variety of support to fill their professional resource.

The analysis of modern educational theory and practice in Ukraine shows that a modern teacher needs support from both the school administration and colleagues and parents. Proper support for teachers requires a systematic restructuring of the relationships of all participants in the inclusive process, which involves interaction with parents, exchange of experience with colleagues, partnerships with the administration of the institution and specialists of the inclusive resource center.

Taking into account the indisputable significance of the problem, *the aim* of the study is to identify current problems of professional support for teachers of inclusive education in a general secondary education institution.

Research methods

In the study, we used the following methods: theoretical analysis of the problem of implementing pedagogical support for teachers of inclusive education; a survey of the administration of institutions (school principals and their deputies), teachers, parents; quantitative and qualitative analysis of research results.

The theoretical analysis of the problem under study provided for a thorough study of literature sources on the problem of pedagogical support for teachers of inclusive education, difficulties in its implementation and features of implementation.

The purpose of the survey of the administration of institutions was to study the following aspects of professional support for teachers:

- the administration’s interest in additional teacher training;
- creating a support team in the institution;
- actions of the administration to provide financial assistance for the creation of resource rooms in the institution;
- involving teachers in scientific and methodological events: conferences, seminars, webinars;

– engaging additional specialists.

When processing the results of the study, the following factors were taken into account:

– the desire of the management to create an inclusive educational environment in the institution;

– understanding of the problems of a child with SEN by the administration and involvement of relevant specialists;

– encouraging teachers to participate in scientific events;

– avoiding misunderstandings on the part of parents when approving an individual development program.

The purpose of the survey of inclusive education teachers was to identify current problems of professional support from the immediate environment: the administration of the institution, colleagues, parents of children with SEN and teachers of the institute of postgraduate teacher education. Conversations with teachers were aimed at clarifying current problems of methodological readiness to implement the tasks of inclusive education.

Teachers were asked the following questions:

– How do you identify the special needs of a child in a classroom or institution?

– What innovative support methods do you use?

– How does the mentoring of experienced teachers work in your institution?

– How do you share your experience?

The purpose of the parental survey was to identify the possibility of providing support to the teacher from the family: the desire to cooperate with teachers, establishing partnerships with them, and forming adequate expectations of the developmental dynamics of children with SEN.

In order to do this, parents were asked the following questions:

– What are your expectations from the institution regarding the future of your child?

– How would you describe your child's teacher?

– How do you support teachers to fulfill your expectations for your child's development?

When processing the results of the study, the following factors were taken into account:

– adequacy of parents' assessment of the state of development of a child with special educational needs, its difficulties and prospects;

– parents' willingness to actively cooperate;

– parents' use of teachers' recommendations.

Professional development of teachers is carried out throughout their professional career. Teachers always face new professional challenges, as all children are unique in their development, regardless of the presence or absence of developmental difficulties. Changing priorities in professional development: "lifelong learning"

closely connects teachers of general secondary education institutions and teachers of postgraduate teacher education institutes throughout their professional careers. Therefore, teachers were involved in the survey.

In a *conversation with teachers of the postgraduate education institution*, we found out the main issues that teachers address in order to receive methodological support, in particular, what difficulties in working with children and parents teachers highlight; what assistance they need from teachers of postgraduate teacher education in implementing the tasks of inclusive education.

To process the results of the study, we conducted *a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results*.

Results

Theoretical analysis of the research problem has shown that scientists – Khaleel, N., Alhosani, M., Duyar, I. (2021); Miesera, S., Gebhardt, M. (2018); Perrin, A.L., Jury, M., Desombre, C. (2021); Saloviita, T. (2020); Avramidis, E., Elias, E. (2007); Horne, P.E., Timmon, s V. (2009); Lingo, A.S., Barton and Arwood, S.M., Jolivette (2011); Scruggs, T.E., Mastropieri, M.A., McDuffie, K.A. (2007); Waldron, N.L., Redd, L. (2011), recognize the need to support the teacher in the implementation of inclusive education as a leading factor in its success.

The analysis of the literature allowed us to generalize the concept of “professional support for teachers”. In the study, this concept is understood as the presence of close social ties: administration, colleagues, parents of children with SEN, teachers of postgraduate teacher education institutions, which are the main resource of professional support. Awareness of principals, positive attitude of the teacher to children with SEN and their parents, development of practical courses, active interaction will contribute to the professional development of Modern teachers, the formation of an inclusive environment, providing comprehensive support to the teacher.

The pilot study involved 20 representatives of the administration (school principals and their deputies), 80 teachers of general secondary education institutions with an inclusive form of education; 50 parents of children with SEN; and 10 teachers of the institute of postgraduate education.

Our research has shown that school principals and their deputies support the development of teachers’ professional competence in inclusive education, but are not interested in professional development during working hours. It is revealed that teachers are engaged in professional activities and at the same time take courses remotely after working hours. In particular, elective courses: “Inclusive Competence of the Modern Teacher of the New Ukrainian School”, “Pedagogical Support for Children with SEN”, “Individualization of the Inclusive Educational Environment”, “Innovative Teaching Strategies for Children with SEN”, and others.

About 90% of school administrators mainly assist in organizing psychological and pedagogical support teams; 10% help teachers overcome difficulties in working with parents. In general, teachers' requests for support are aimed at finding special educators, a teacher's assistant, and sometimes a child's assistant if a student is unable to serve himself/herself. Resource rooms are better equipped in urban communities, and, accordingly, insufficient in rural ones, due to lack of funds.

100% of school administrators involve teachers in conferences, webinars, and roundtables, but in their free time. The overwhelming majority of the administration (85%) participates in the meetings of the support team. Only 15% of managers conduct explanatory work with parents on the specifics of implementing their children's curriculum.

The interviews showed that 100% of teachers are aware of the problems of children and their parents. This starts when a child enters school. Teachers pay attention to the speed of information processing, the quality of memorization of educational material, and performance. 51% of teachers consider intellectual difficulties to be the main signs of special needs; 23% – speech disorders; 26% – manifestations of undesirable behavior and autism spectrum disorders. Teachers noted that they observe some manifestations in the classroom, and during extracurricular hours (Figure 1).

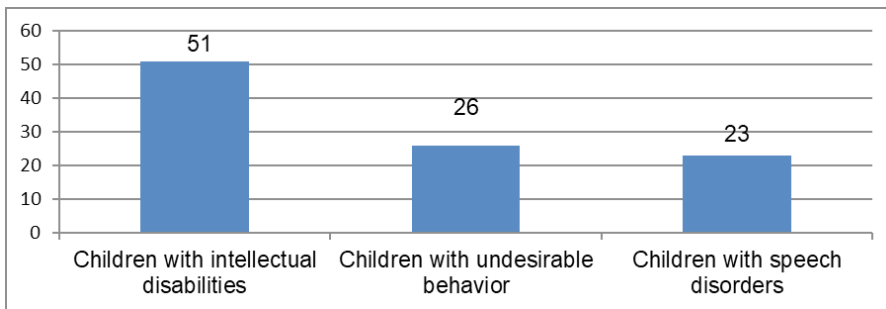


Figure 1. Teachers' identification of children's special needs

The survey showed that teachers are not indifferent to providing pedagogical support to children with SEN. In particular, 23% of teachers use differentiated teaching during lessons; 55% use an individual approach; 22% use the technology of "direct teaching". The results are shown in Figure 2.

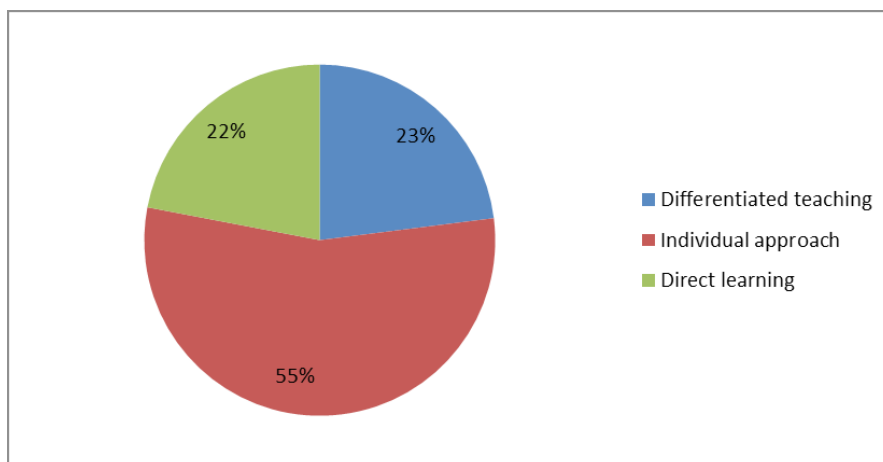


Figure 2. Technologies to support children with special education needs

The study shows that mentoring is very common among teachers. 53% of teachers said they seek advice from experienced teachers: *“I turn to a mentor”*; *“I consult a teacher who used to teach this child”*; *“I ask senior colleagues”* and *“I ask a reputable teacher for help”*.

All educational institutions have methodological associations that discuss current issues of teaching children with SEN. The exchange of experience is carried out constantly, both during the meeting of the methodological association, and during visits and mutual visits to lessons.

A survey of parents showed that 45% of parents adequately assess the condition of their children, see their real prospects and are ready to cooperate. Respondents confirmed this as follows: *“This is my cross to bear”*; *“I have two children: one is very smart, and the other is not so smart”*; *“She was born this way, but we need to help her”*; *“Everyone has different learning opportunities, but I have a wonderful son”*; *“She is special, but I have to help her and teach her to work”*.

41% of parents do not fully accept their child’s peculiarities: *“I have a good child, but they don’t always pay active positive attention to him”*; *“I have a smart son, because when he is at home alone with his grandmother, he can measure his blood pressure and give the right pill”*; *“I also had problems with my studies, but it didn’t stop me from becoming a person”*, but they do not refuse to cooperate. 14% of parents believe that society is obliged to provide them with help and support. At the same time, the following trend was found: the younger the child, the more active the parents are. Starting from adolescence, their activity begins to decline significantly. The results of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Readiness of parents to cooperate

Willingness to cooperate	Number of respondents %
Insist on active cooperation	45%
Do not refuse to cooperate, but do not take initiatives themselves	41%
Take a passive position	14%

A survey of teachers taking courses at the institute of postgraduate teacher education showed that they need methodological support (Table 2).

Table 2. Teachers' support needs

The content of the support	Number of respondents %
Teaching children with intellectual disabilities	58%
Training and support for children with autism spectrum disorders	25%
Teaching children with complex disabilities	12%
Methods of work in the support team	5%

The study showed that teachers experience great difficulties in working with parents, in particular due to the fact that they mostly do not recognize problems in the development of their own children – 61%. This is evidenced by the following arguments of parents: “*He is normal*”; “*she is no worse than others*”; “*I have a very beautiful child*”; “*My son understands me at home at first sight*”. 22% of parents blame teachers: “*You don't love my child*”; “*You didn't find an approach to him/her*”. 17% of parents do not make much effort in parenting, because they believe that even without this, the child will grow up and all problems will be corrected.

Teachers of the institution of postgraduate pedagogical education are addressed with questions of a specific practical nature, in particular: how to professionally direct the attention of parents to the problems of their own children; what methods to use to correct a child's hyperactivity; how to distinguish between a child's basic ill-manneredness and his or her special needs; how to form the life competence of children with SEN in a general secondary education institution.

Conclusions and prospects for further research

The overall analysis of the survey results led to the following conclusions:

- the administration of institutions is interested in improving the professional competence of teachers, but at the expense of their own free time;
- psychological and pedagogical support teams are created in all institutions, although there is a significant problem with involving special teachers;
- in general, the administration of institutions does not refuse parents of children with SEN to study at their institution;

- the administration tries to create resource rooms in the institution, but there are not always enough funds;
- the administration tries to create a comfortable environment for children with SEN, their parents and teachers;
- teachers mostly demonstrate pedagogical observation and pedagogical wisdom in identifying children's special needs and try to convince parents of the need for professional help for their children;
- mentoring by experienced colleagues and the work of methodological associations are predominantly used in institutions;
- parents often have inadequate expectations of their own children's success and need help in this matter;
- as children get older, parents' willingness to actively cooperate begins to fade, due to the expectation of rapid dynamics in children's development;
- teachers have a harder time working with children who have cognitive and emotional-volitional disorders;
- teachers need practical advice, trainings, and master classes during advanced training courses.

The analysis of the data made it possible to identify areas of professional support for teachers to work with children with SEN in the context of inclusive education in general secondary education:

- increasing teachers' incentives to work with such children;
- active involvement of special educators in the provision of correctional and developmental services;
- providing funding for institutions to create an inclusive educational environment and equip resource rooms;
- conducting educational work with parents to form adequate expectations from their own children and inviting parents to lessons;
- providing teachers with practical advice on minimizing unwanted behavior and modifying educational material for children with intellectual difficulties.

A significant problem is the low psychological and methodological readiness of teachers to work with children with special educational needs. Improving teachers' competence in the field of differentiated inclusive education should be a key objective of advanced training courses. Taking into account the current problems of professional support for teachers of general secondary education institutions will help to eliminate obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education.

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✉ **Dr. Lubov Pryadko, Assoc. Prof.**

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-7168-4601

Department of Vocational Education and Management
Sumy Regional Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education
Sumy, Ukraine

E-mail: Lubovpryadko77@ukr.net

✉ **Prof. Dr. Svitlana Myronova**

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-9418-9128

Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University
Kamianets-Podilsky, Ukraine

E-mail: myronova@kpnu.edu.ua