

Leadership in education: communications on introducing inclusive education in Ukraine

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Abstract This paper focuses on the leadership aspects of education. Specifically, it analyses the statistical indicators of the number of people with special educational needs in Ukraine divided by certain areas.

The paper starts with an introduction that outlines specifics of inclusive education in the Ukrainian society. Then, the paper analyses and reports the results of the survey of secondary school teachers in Lviv and Lviv oblast with the definition of their level of inclusiveness awareness, attitude towards this process and inclusive class experience.

Our results reveal the inadequate level of communication between state authorities, specialists, parents and the general public in the educational environment. Moreover, we determine the key benefits of inclusion for all participants in the inclusive education process. Finally, the paper proposes the approaches to overcoming individual barriers in communications in the inclusion field.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, the Ukrainian society is at the stage of reforming all spheres of life: economic, political, social, cultural, educational, medical, etc. One of the strategic directions of modern Ukrainian education is the importance of socialization and inclusion for people with special educational needs (SEN) (Institute of Educational Analysis 2017).

Since the late 1990s, inclusive education in the Western industrialized countries has been the main trend in educational progress which allowed, on additional terms, to bring the SEN individuals into the educational process in ordinary schools. The Salamanca Declaration on Principles, Policies and Practices in the Sphere of Teaching Persons with Special Needs, adopted by the UNESCO in 1994, is one of the fundamental instruments for the effective introduction of inclusion in the world (Basic Education 1994). According to it, all children have the right to study at an ordinary school despite their physical and intellectual development, social status, disease, emotional state, knowledge of languages, race, country of origin, gender, etc. (UNESCO 1994).

In many countries, the transition from segregation to integration and inclusion in education followed different scenarios and algorithms (Jandová 2012). It proved a difficult and long-lasting mechanism for the introduction of inclusion and also the impossibility of creating a universal education model (Strielkowski et al. 2016). Sometimes threats come from various sides – for example in the form of boosting academic productivity of higher educational institutions using fraudulent methods (Strielkowski 2017). However, the experience of most countries that have introduced inclusion shows the success of this form of education – the society fully protects human rights, because it allows each child to exercise the rights and opportunities, guarantees each person with special needs to be a full member of society. This, among other things, should become a prerequisite for the construction of a well-balanced social policy (Chvátalová 2016) and the transition and integration to the big European family (Jiroudková et al. 2015).

In 2009, Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and undertook a

number of commitments, including the provision of their right to education. Since September 2017, in Ukraine, according to the adopted amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Education”, individuals with SEN have access to educational services at all educational institutions, regardless of the “disability status” (Verkhovna Rada 2017). It was at this time that ordinary Ukrainian schools introduced inclusive classes (with no more than three people with SEN), developed individual curricula, started special lessons and were able to meet their first success and encounter difficulties.

The paradox of the mentality of the Ukrainian nation is the ambiguous attitude to many issues important to the functioning of society. According to a study conducted by UNICEF in 2015, 96% of Ukrainians agree with the statement that children with disabilities should have the same rights and opportunities as normal children, but only 13% of respondents are ready to accept children with special needs as friends and equal citizens (UNICEF 2017).

Ukrainian society is not fully prepared to introduce inclusive education. There are both psychological (the Soviet era stereotypes of perception, the practice of pretending “non-existence” of persons with disabilities, unequal rights of different segments of the population, etc.) and technical barriers (lack of ramps in most residential buildings, catering entities, public institutions, the lack of specially equipped toilet rooms, the lack of light and sound signals, inscriptions using the Braille font, etc.).

The existing mechanism for the introduction of inclusion in Ukrainian realities faces many obstacles in the communication process between its main participants. According to the analysis of the media, there are many unresolved issues among teachers and specialists, parents of children with SEN, parents of normo-typic children, and in society as a whole (Drachkovska 2017; Dudar 2017; or Belovolchenko 2017). This also applies to the lack of trust, the lack of experience and effective communication, including the state authorities.

Official sources state that the introduction of inclusive education in Ukrainian realities is constrained by the need to address the tasks related to normative-legal, organizational-financial, personnel, scientific and educational-methodological provision of SEN education and training (National Report on the status and prospects for the development of education in Ukraine 2016; Trade Union of Education and Science workers of Ukraine 2013).

Therefore, in order to determine the level of existing communications in the introduction of inclusive education in Ukraine, it is necessary to find out the factors with the greatest influence on this process, ways of addressing the neutralization of negative influence in communications between all participants in the inclusive environment.

Our research goal is to determine the level of communication while introducing inclusive education into secondary schools in Ukraine, for example, in Lviv and Lviv oblast (region). The tasks of this research can be formulated as follows:

- to analyse quantitative and relative indicators of the number of persons with SEN in Ukraine in general and in the regions of Ukraine in particular;
- to identify the peculiarities of the introduction of inclusive education in Ukrainian society;
- to outline the key benefits of introducing inclusive education for all actors;
- to analyse the level of teachers’ awareness of inclusion, their attitude and experience in the inclusive class on the results of a survey conducted in secondary schools in Lviv and Lviv oblast;
- to propose approaches to removing barriers in communications between participants in inclusive environment.

Our research methodology is levelled in accordance with the tasks and hypotheses. In the study of the level of communications while introducing inclusion into the Ukrainian society we used:

- system analysis and synthesis – to determine the benefits of inclusion introduction for all participants in the inclusion process, outlining barriers for communication in this process and ways to address them;
- content analysis – for the synthesis of information materials on inclusive education, presented at Internet resources of state institutions and public organizations;
- statistical analysis – for processing information in the analysis and assessment of the necessity and the state of introduction of inclusive education in Ukraine;
- structural analysis of the environment of inclusion on the basis of child-centred pedagogical paradigm;
- sociological research in the form of a survey – to reveal the level of teachers’ awareness of inclusion, their attitude towards this form of education and experience in the inclusive class.

Teachers’ interviews used the face-to-face interview method. In total, 276 respondents were interviewed – all of them teachers working in secondary schools of I-II and I-III degrees and operating in Lviv and Lviv oblast. We employed a mechanistic-typological selection with the establishment of quotas based on the type of settlements (rural settlements, towns of rayon significance, cities of oblast significance, Lviv city), residential

areas (20 districts), and the type of teachers' classes (1- 4 classes, 5-11 (12) classes) in the calculation of the sample. The survey toolkit was developed by the members of the "Sprawled Wings" NGO, a poll was conducted by the sociological agency called "Fama".

2 Limitations of research

With regard to the limitations of this research, one can see that statistics on the number of persons and children with disabilities in Ukraine constitutes a problem. In any society, there are people with disabilities. As presented in Figure 1, in 2017 the number of persons with disabilities amounted 2603.

Since 2014, this figure has not changed. The reasons might be the following: the lack of data, as well as insufficient data on the number of those civil and military people who got their disabilities during military operations in Ukraine.

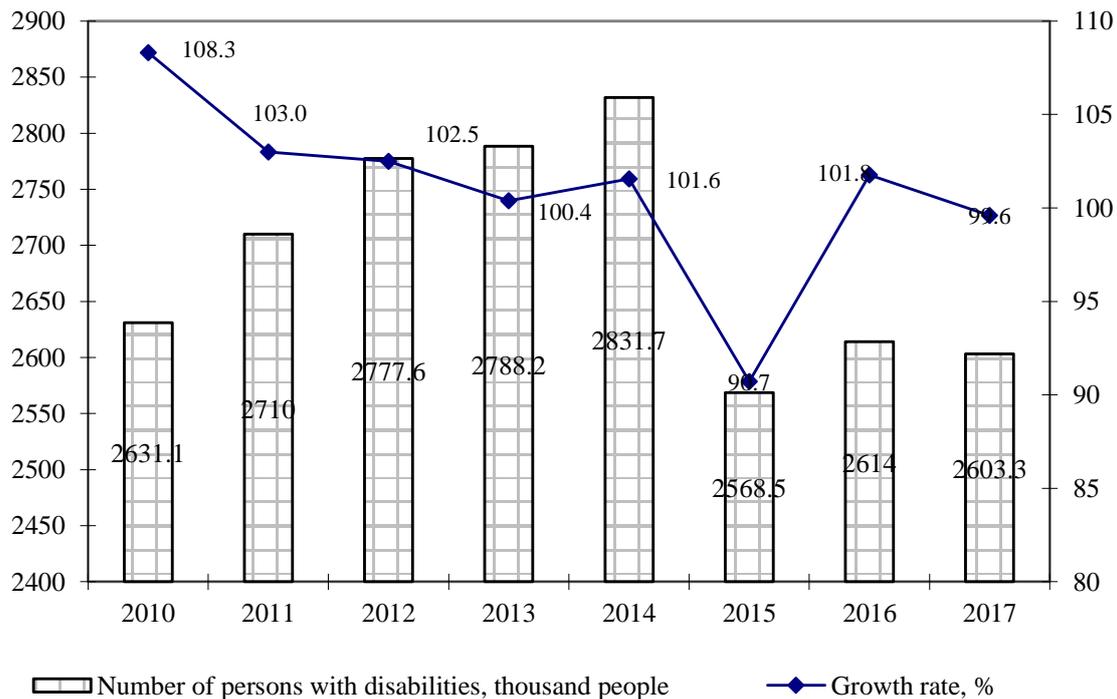


Fig. 1. Dynamics of the number of persons with disabilities in Ukraine in 2010-2017
Source: Own results based on Dostup do pravdi (2017)

In recent years, the proportion of people with disabilities in Ukraine increased from 3% to 6% in the total population (Day Kyiv 2017). In terms of regions of Ukraine, an analysis of this indicator by 2017 showed that the largest share of people with disabilities in the Lviv region was 7.7%, a significantly smaller share was in the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv oblasts - 6.7 and 6 respectively, 4%, and the lowest indicator was in Luhansk, Kherson and Chernivtsi oblasts (2% each). In the regional context, the largest share of children with disabilities among all people with disabilities was registered in 2017 in Rivne (9.1%), Zakarpattya (Transcarpathia) (8.8%), Chernivtsi (7.9%) and Dnipropetrovsk (7.3%) oblasts. The smallest proportion of children with disabilities among people with disabilities was in Luhansk, Cherkasy and Donetsk oblasts (4.2% each). The share of children with disabilities (up to 18) among the children of 0-17 y in Ukraine in 2017 was the highest in Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv and Kharkiv oblasts, and the lowest was in Luhansk, Sumy, Kirovograd, Kherson and Chernivtsi oblasts (State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2017).

One can see that invalidity represents a complex social phenomenon, and the state and its citizens must have a stable attitude and support of it. A significant number of children with disabilities in Ukraine need certain conditions to receive, along with other members of society, equal opportunities for delivering their rights. Inclusive education is one of these opportunities.

3 Inclusion of children with special education needs

Inclusive education is not a choice of a particular school or group of schools, it is a vector of life of the country. The purpose of inclusive education is to educate full-fledged members of society by involving all participants in

the educational process in general school activities. In this case, when it comes to a child with SEN, it should be taken into account that her/his capacity may be conditional but should not be a constant. It should depend on the circumstances of the child, on her/his ability and desire to participate in a particular event (Pirrie and Head 2007). To maximize the use of opportunities for inclusion, full awareness of all stakeholders and organizations is required (Allen and Cowdery 2012).

The world practice of using inclusive education for children with SEN has shown the benefits of this approach and has become the basis for its introduction in Ukraine. In the domestic system of education, the inclusive approach to learning is at the developing stage.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the number of children covered by inclusive education has tended to increase in recent years (Table 1). In 2016-2017, the largest number of children with SEN were involved in inclusiveness in the city of Kyiv, Volyn and Poltava regions, and the smallest – in Mykolayiv and Kharkiv oblasts. At the same time, at schools of Mykolayiv region, the only one in Ukraine, the number of children covered by inclusiveness has decreased by 18% compared to the previous academic year.

Table 1. Dynamics of Introducing Inclusion Indicators in Ukraine in 2014-2017 study years, %

Oblast of Ukraine	Number of children			Rate of growth from year to year, %	
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2015-2016/ 2014-2015	2016-2017/ 2015-2016
Vinnitsya	31	42	113	135,5	269,0
Volyn	145	156	268	107,6	171,8
Dnipropetrovsk	152	168	237	110,5	141,1
Donetsk	0	81	108	0,0	133,3
Zhytomyr	83	158	260	190,4	164,6
Zakarpattya	74	108	151	145,9	139,8
Zaporizhzhya	57	66	147	115,8	222,7
Ivano-Frankivsk	5	13	54	260,0	415,4
Kiyv	232	287	443	123,7	154,4
Kirovograd	58	99	188	170,7	189,9
Luhansk	9	12	35	133,3	291,7
Lviv	97	62	149	63,9	240,3
Mykolayiv	33	39	32	118,2	82,1
Odesa	92	99	118	107,6	119,2
Poltava	176	200	266	113,6	133,0
Rivne	86	109	197	126,7	180,7
Sumy	37	42	72	113,5	171,4
Ternopil	44	31	68	70,5	219,4
Kharkiv	24	24	33	100,0	137,5
Kherson	116	110	154	94,8	140,0
Khmelnitsky	212	209	227	98,6	108,6
Cherkasy	56	54	135	96,4	250,0
Chernivtsi	8	130	169	1625,0	130,0
Chernihiv	56	76	112	135,7	147,4
City of Kyiv	282	345	444	122,3	128,7
Total number	2165	2720	4180	125,6	153,7

Source: Own results based on Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2017)

Our analysis of official data shows that the coverage rate of children with SEN is generally increasing in Ukraine but is characterized by insufficient levels. In 2016-2017, 2.7% of all children with disabilities under 18 were involved in inclusive education. In the developed countries, this indicator is approaching 95%.

4 Level of communication between participants in inclusive education

The effectiveness of an inclusive process depends entirely on the availability and quality of communication between the main actors. Today, parents of children with SEN are the most interested parties in communication, but at the same time they have the greatest distrust of state authorities and other participants in the inclusive process. When assessing communications in the field of inclusion, one can state that there is a lack of sufficient communication between all participants. Partially communication is established between parents of children with SEN and educators and profile specialists. It should be noted that a significant proportion of teachers do not perceive parents as partners and actually specialists in the development of an individual program for the

education of their child.

Public authorities support communication at the formal level with only particular target audiences – educators, specialists and parents of children with SEN. There is no communication with other parties. However, the provision of a comprehensive approach to the effectiveness of inclusion implementation is impossible without sufficient information and involvement of the parents of normo-typical children, the children and the general public, in this process.

The minimum level of communication in the context of inclusive education is characteristic of teachers, specialists and parents of standard children, as well as the general public. This does not contribute to the effectiveness of inclusion, since the school teaching staff act as a translator of the attitude towards children with SEN, and their involvement in school education. It is once again important to emphasize the need to increase the professional competence of all professionals involved in the process of inclusive education.

The analysis of communication links between all participants in the inclusive process revealed a lack of adequate level of communication. The work of public organizations in the process of inclusion implementation is especially important. They are the initiators of most of the changes and innovations in the inclusion environment.

5 Main barriers to communication in the context of inclusive education

It becomes apparent that the process of communication between the main participants in an inclusive learning environment, as well as any other communication, has to deal with obstacles. These obstacles may have different nature of origin, different effects (from distortion of information up to complete blockage of the communication process) and various manifestations and consequences.

In our opinion, the main communicative obstacles in the field of inclusive education are connected with personal barriers of teachers, specialists, intra-school barriers, barriers of school environments (normo-typical children and their parents), educational and public barriers (Table 2).

Table 2. The main barriers of communication in the field of inclusion and the means of their elimination

Barriers	Purpose of communication	Measures and communication tools
Personal barriers of teachers - belief that everything is fine enough; - doubt in own sufficient knowledge and skills; - fear that their incompetence will become apparent to the school administration or colleagues; - fear that work will take too much time or other resources; - uncertainty in support and resources from the administration and public authorities.	- professional transformation and rethinking of teachers' pedagogical competencies; - overcoming personal barriers by increasing own professional level; - understanding being a teacher as life-long learning.	1. Providing wide-ranging support (financial, resource, methodological, consultative, etc.) for the idea of inclusive education by public authorities at all levels. 2. Conducting nationwide, regional and local campaigns involving all media to promote inclusive education. 3. Implementation of mass information and PR-events with the participation of people with special needs in order to form a loyal attitude from the general public and every citizen. 4. Filling available resources with necessary information, continuous monitoring of its completeness, relevance and updating. 5. Ensuring free access to information about the principles and benefits of inclusion for all participants in the inclusive process, their environment and the general public. 6. Conducting seminars, round tables, trainings for teachers of inclusive classes, parents of children with SEN and parents of normo-typic
Internal school barriers - relatively autonomous environment of the school does not facilitate the cooperation of teachers, team planning, joint problem solving; - rejection, hostile attitude to new ideas coming from 'above'; - stability of the form of the school functioning and the organization of school activities; - inappropriateness of most premises of general educational institutions for the education of children with SEN (lack of ramps, specially equipped toilets, school supplies, textbooks and methodical support, etc.).	- encouraging the exchange of experiences between teachers; - increase of motivation for introduction of inclusion; - overcoming inertia in the school environment; - eliminating physical barriers and making educational institutions accessible to all children through improved logistics.	
Barriers of school environments (normo-typical children and their parents) - rejection of inclusiveness in general; - requirement to isolate children with SEN; - being scared by children with SEN; - ignoring children with SEN; - intolerant, aggressive attitude towards	- Formation of understanding uniqueness of each person, regardless of his/her peculiarities; - creation of comfortable and favourable school environment for children with SEN and normo-typic children; - Ensuring mutual acceptance, respect and	

children with SEN.	positive attitude among all students of the inclusive class.	pupils of inclusive classes.
General educational barriers - insufficient financing of education and inclusive education in particular; - low level of special and pedagogical education in general; - insufficient qualification of teachers; - limited material and human resources in the field of education.	- provision of adequate financial, material and personnel support by the state bodies of the education sector in general, separate educational initiatives, including inclusiveness; - creation of conditions for effective training of pedagogical staff for the needs of the inclusive process; - providing regional education authorities with an adequate level of teacher training.	7. Implementation of an effective system of stimulating the administration of general education institutions, teachers and specialists.
Social barriers - lack of information about the benefits of inclusion for all participants in the process; - insufficiency or uncertainty of information; - changes necessary for effective introduction of inclusion have been too wide, and therefore difficult to achieve in a short time; - lack of awareness of the real effect of inclusion introduction	- providing all participants with comprehensive and accessible information on the principles and benefits of inclusion; - raising awareness about inclusive education and positive attitude towards people with special needs; - involving children with SEN into active social life and participation in all its aspects	

Source: Own results

One of the main tasks of introducing inclusiveness in the Ukrainian society is the increase of the level of communication and awareness of the society as a whole and individual tangible target audiences. First of all, it is for parents of children with SEN, representatives of administration of schools and teachers of inclusive classes, schoolchildren of inclusive classes, their parents, and also specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, correctional teachers, etc.). The result of such activities should be the high level of loyalty of all members of society to people with disabilities and the formation of an inclusive environment.

6 Conclusions

Based on the analysis of statistical data on the number of people with special needs, one can see the impending necessity to introduce inclusive education in the Ukrainian society. The share of persons with disabilities in Ukraine represents about 6% of the total population. The share of children under the age of 18 in terms of regions ranges from 4.2% (Donetsk, Luhansk and Cherkasy regions) to 9.1% (Rivne region) of the number of people with disabilities. The total number of children with disabilities as of in 2017 was 15904 people. A significant number of children with SEN requires the introduction and development of an inclusive education system, as opposed to their segregation in specialized boarding schools.

In this paper, we were able to outline the main communication links between participants in the inclusive process using the results of the structural analysis of the inclusive education environment. However, we need to admit that sufficient level of communication has not been found in any direction. Practically, this means that there are no communication links between state authorities, the general public or parents of standard-type children. There is a minimal level of communication between children with SEN and their parents and other children of inclusive classes and parents. The same level was found among the teachers and parents of normo-typic children.

All in all, it appears that the main barriers of communication are outlined in the inclusion environment at different levels: personal level of teachers, levels of direct school environment of children with SEN, secondary school and general education levels, as well as at the general public level. We might conclude that most of the communication obstacles are due to insufficient information about the features and benefits of inclusive education. Thence, there are measures that might help to eliminate them, if selected and carefully prepared on the basis of the analysis of the nature of obstacles.

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