

TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES FOR DIVERSITY EDUCATION AND THEIR DEVELOPING IN TRAINING COURSES

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Abstract: *Diversity education as an approach of integrating into the educational environment of students, differ in status, psychological features, behavioural, social-economic, cultural and other characteristics is analysed. Author examines the results of the study of teachers' competencies for the work with heterogeneous students' groups, provided in the project TEMPUS-543873. The content of the module «Diversity pedagogics and inclusion in education» for the teachers' training courses is revealed.*

Key words: *inclusive education, diversity education, heterogeneous students' groups, teachers' competencies.*

Introduction

Problem of research is connected with integration into the educational environment of students differ in status, psychological features, behavioural, social-economic, cultural and other characteristics. This task is becoming more and more important today.

Educational environment acquires more variety, diversity, - heterogeneity in the full sense of this word. For example, PISA studies show that changes in the educational system caused by family circumstances of workers, social and economic context and migration in general not only affect student achievement, but also collectively determine it even more than the school itself, (Shadoian-Gersing, 2011, p. 20). They also affect on comfort and communication in the school environment, student motivation to learning, on the degree of conflicts in a heterogeneous group.

Migration is only the one side of the student audience diversity, which is the most actual in European researches. But there are a lot of other heterogeneous groups of students, work with which requires a special approach. They are: gifted students, students from socially disadvantaged families and children with behavioural problems, and children with disabilities. Regardless of the features of their development, each of them has the right to learn in a normal educational institution, the right to access to all types of educational services and the possibility of adequate pedagogical support or aid.

Therefore, it remains questionable what special competences must modern teacher have to work successfully in a heterogeneous team of students, what values he / she must spread. Heterogeneity of society, reflected in the heterogeneity of a student group, is one of the most important educational issues today.

There are many ways to support heterogeneous students' groups at a modern school: social and psychological support, implemented by social pedagogues and psychologists; the responsibility of curators; an activity carried out by experts involved to resolve contentious issues of students' life (law enforcement professionals, health professionals, economists, and others).

Educational systems of different European countries in general have developed requirements for these types of activities, as well as the legal framework: laws, decrees, orders, directives and instructions on specific work with orphans and children left without parental care, children who are at risk, children with special needs of psycho-physiological development.

But many problems in the implementation of inclusive education remain. Among them there are the following:

- the unwillingness of society to accept the idea of widely integrated education for heterogeneous groups of students. It is often shown in lack of support for collaborative learning of mixed groups of children (healthy and having some disabilities, with normal behaviour and with behavioural problems, etc.) – from both students' parents and teachers;
- insufficient level of professional pedagogical readiness for the implementation of principles and technologies of Diversity education;
- low level of resource support for inclusion: lack of special equipment for the education of children with disabilities, as well as lack of scientific and methodical support of teachers' activity in inclusion.

So it is important to monitor the level of readiness of teachers - as the main providers of the idea of heterogeneous education - to implement diversity in their daily teaching activities. It is necessary to understand what competencies are needed for working with heterogeneous students' groups, and how to develop them during training courses. This is the *research focus* of this paper.

Results and conclusions of previously published studies explain that the integration of different students in the common educational process and environment is extremely important, but many teachers, both at high and secondary schools, are often not ready to do this. And what

competencies do they need for this, and how to teach teachers to work with diversity – many questions are opened.

Subject of diversity pedagogics is closely linked with issues of inclusive education. However, the term “inclusion” in education is often used in the narrow sense - as integration into the educational environment of children with special needs, with disabilities. At the same time, in one class there can be a variety of students: children with disabilities, and gifted children, and children from socially disadvantaged families, and migrant children. Teachers often have difficulties because they need to integrate all children, regardless of their social, psychological, economic, cultural features, - into common educational environment. And this inclusion (in the broad sense), can be called diversity education. This aspect is not enough disclosed in literature. Much of the researches are dedicated to the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Only in a smaller amount of papers or books inclusion is treated in the broad meaning.

For example, in the book “Behavior Solutions for the Inclusive Classroom” (Aune, Burt & Gennaro, 2010) authors show that inclusion becomes the norm in general education, most school systems and community groups now have inclusive classrooms or activities. That is why teachers are faced with behaviours they have never seen before. So, the authors: B. Aune, B. Burt and P. Gennaro, - tried to explain what to do when a child has unusual behaviour in a general education inclusive classroom. On various examples they proved that it is possible to accommodate learning differences and sustain a positive learning environment for all students, with different behaviour models.

Another work – “Action Research for Inclusive Education” (ed. by F. Armstrong, M. Moore) addresses a wide range of real-life situations by exploring ways in which teachers have tackled inequalities in the school environment through action research based on principles of equality and democracy. Among these situations authors analysed strategies, factors and conditions for successful inclusion of such heterogeneous students’ groups as: minority ethnic groups, including refugee and asylum seeking children; children with autism; gay students; children with challenging behaviour; young people with severe learning difficulties; marginalising practices in further education. Also the role of learning support assistants in inclusion, and developing links between special and mainstream schools are analysed in this book (Armstrong & Moore, 2004).

Authors of the book “Best Practices for the Inclusive Classroom” (ed. by V.G. Spencer, R.T. Boon) tried to provide both general and special education teachers with a “practical, user-friendly, step-by-step guide” of scientifically grounded instructional strategies on a variety of content areas, including reading, writing and spelling, mathematics, science, and social studies. The book also includes a chapter on how teachers, parents, and school professionals can work together to ensure success for all students. It is underlined that among the steps and conditions for establishing collaboration there are the following: effective communication, co-teaching strategies, experience exchanging and learning the skills of each other, ethical behaviour, trust and respect in the collaboration team, etc. (Spencer & Boon, 2010).

An interesting example of widen approach to inclusion is shown at the book “Learning Diversity in the Chinese Classroom” (ed. by Sh. N. Phillipson). The concept is based on international trends, including those in many Southeast Asian countries which are moving toward inclusive education and special needs, and includes chapters on giftedness, counselling and behaviour management.

The context of inclusive education in Asia is described, the conceptions of inclusion and cultural diversity from the perspective of the Asian classroom, and how they are different to the Western classroom - are provided. Also educational and socio-emotional needs of children in the inclusive classroom are analysed, as well as different heterogeneous groups and teachers’ work with them. In the book authors not only discussed about how a teacher can cater for different types of diversity according to subject, including mathematics, languages, information technology, arts, - but

also described a whole-school approach to meeting the educational requirements of children with special needs (Phillipson, 2007).

Some papers are dedicated to the training of teachers for inclusive education providing.

For example, N. Semago writes about development of skills for inclusive education, - but it concerns specialists in specific disabilities, not all teachers in their daily work with diversity (Semago, 2008, p.60). Another Russian scientist - T. Shcherbova, basing on the international experience, shows that development of inclusive education is a long-term strategy, requiring patience, tolerance, continuity, successiveness and complex approach to its implementation (Shcherbova, 2008, p.91).

Surely, providing the inclusion needs also organizational and managerial mechanisms. A school must be restructured so that all students learn together. As it is shown by D. Sage (1996), "all approaches to inclusive schooling require administrative and managerial changes to move from the traditional approaches to elementary and high school education".

The broad meaning of inclusive education is used and worked on in the project TEMPUS-543873 "Training of teachers and educational managers to work with heterogeneous groups and organizations" (2013-2016). Conceptually this project is based on the guidance value that diversity and heterogeneity of social groups - is not a problem complicating the progressive development, but a treasure, wealth. And a society needs this potential of diversity for its success (Graumann & Pevzner, 2014). Capacity and performance, and competitiveness of the individual and the group increases when using the potential wealth of diversity in the group. That is why inclusive education gives a lot of advantages not only for a personality, but for a group or society as a whole.

Despite the need for inclusive education, and amid of a large number of works on the concept of inclusion –authors haven't fully explored the question what must a teacher know and able to do for the successful work with heterogeneous groups. To answer this question, empirical and monitoring studies are first of all necessary.

Methodology of Research

One of such monitoring studies was conducted by a team of National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Kyiv, Ukraine) in the framework of the project TEMPUS-543873 "Training of teachers and educational managers to work with heterogeneous groups and organizations" in 2014-2015.

Subject of research was the educational needs of teachers and educational managers in the field of inclusive education and their professional competences, affecting on providing the socio-psychological and pedagogical support of students heterogeneous groups in educational institutions.

The aim of the study was to obtain analytical information about the level of teachers' and educational managers' professional competencies development in the field of socio-psychological and pedagogical support of heterogeneous students' groups – for further working out of training programs and other educational resources for teachers and heads of educational institutions.

Teachers and headmasters of secondary schools, gymnasiums and lyceums in Kyiv (Ukraine) were the target group of our study.

The survey polled 270 people - teachers and headmasters, among them 230 teachers and 40 headmasters. Among the respondents there were teachers of all school disciplines, social pedagogues, and practical psychologists. The quotas allocated to categories of teachers and educational managers have been determined in proportion to their quantitative representation in the general population.

Methods and tools of the study were the questionnaire and focus group discussion. The questionnaire contained questions about teachers' competencies for working with heterogeneous students' groups, such as: students-migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees; students who are at risk; students-orphans and children left without parental care; students with special needs; students with high levels of academic excellence, creativity (gifted students).

For the assessment, two types of questions were used. The first one was “Which of the proposed competencies are most needed to work with students of a particular group”. And the second one was about the degree in which do respondents possess these competencies.

Also, the questionnaire contained questions on priority sources and forms of professional development for these teachers’ competencies developing.

Data Analysis was based on the matrix, in which the analyzed competencies were divided into groups: social-and-personal, academic and professional.

For example, concerning the group of (gifted) talented students such competences were offered for the assessment:

1. Knowledge of theories, concepts, approaches to work with gifted children;
2. Possession of special technologies, methods, techniques, ways of activities with gifted students;
3. Ability to analyze and interpret the facts and situations in working with gifted students;
4. Ability to collect and analyze information in the work with this category of students;
5. Ability to establish partnerships, to engage dialogue with gifted students;
6. Ability to organize learning process of students in this category;
7. Possession of methods of identification, correction, and prevention of difficulties and problems of gifted students;
8. Possession of technologies and techniques for preservation of psychological and physical health of gifted students;
9. Ability to generate value relation to the abilities of gifted children, and promote these values;
10. The ability to communicate with parents, to advise them on the development of children’s giftedness;
11. Ability to develop at gifted students the ability to self-development, self-improvement.

Among them, competencies №№ 5, 8, 9, 10 were analyzed as social-and-personal ones, competencies №№ 1, 4, 6, 11 - as academic, and competencies №№ 2, 3, 7 - as professional.

According to this scheme teachers’ competence concerning all heterogeneous students’ groups were analyzed.

Results of Research and Discussion

Generally, the relevance of competencies to work with heterogeneous students’ groups was assessed by respondents as medium high. However, these competencies are some more actual for teachers and educational managers from secondary schools and gymnasiums, less – from lyceums. A possible reason for this difference may be that students in Ukrainian lyceums pass more serious selection. One of the undeclared criteria of selection is students’ high intellectual development, and - as a consequence - the homogeneity of the students’ environment.

The quite often answer during the survey was “It is hard to say”. At the same time there was a correlation of the response with a low level of possession by a respondent of these competences: that is, if the level of possession of certain competences is not high enough, he prefers to answer “It is hard to say” – but not “I don’t know”. Thus, the respondents confirmed the social desirability of the questionnaire on this subject and the social desirability of possession of competencies for working with heterogeneous students’ groups.

Answers that show non-demand, non-necessity of these competencies were rare.

Generally, such response was present, but it was correlated with the answers of respondents who stated the lack of competencies for working with heterogeneous students’ groups. In most cases, those respondents who marked the lack of these competencies - they noted that he / she doesn’t possess them sufficiently. For example, it concerns the competencies for working with migrant children.

In general, competencies for working with gifted students and children in difficult life situations were shown as the most actual in Kyiv. Most clearly this aspect was proved by educational managers, to a lesser extent - by teachers.

In the analysis of relevance for competencies for working with heterogeneous students' groups in their three varieties (social-and-personal, professional, academic) - it turned out that all respondents expressed the academic competencies as the most proficient. However, the majority of respondents possess them in medium degree.

As for the other groups, the following can be stated.

1. The level of desirability and relevance of professional competencies for working with heterogeneous students' groups is high enough. But, concerning migrant children, this need is not so pronounced. These results may indicate that there are no educational problems and difficulties with migrant students in Kiev schools. Many respondents found it difficult to answer whether these teachers' competencies are needed.

2. Against this background, the respondents noted not a high demand for special professional competencies for working with migrant students, and it is usually correlated with their responses to the level of possession. In particular, the question about "the ability to break down stereotypes in the perception of migrants" - about 50% of respondents were undecided, whether they possess it, and only 5% had a high degree of its development. It confirms the conclusion that teaching competencies for working with migrant students are not very actual in Kyiv. Managers of educational institutions showed the same point of view.

3. As the most actual professional competencies teachers pointed the competencies for working with orphans - their commitment and desirability is noted by nearly 70% of respondents. But the level of development of these competencies among respondents is below average. Many of the respondents - according to the self-assessment - don't possess these competencies at all. The lowest level of possessing competencies for working with orphan children was shown by secondary schools teachers. Most likely, this is not because they are less ready to work with orphans - but because they feel a greater need for this than teachers from gymnasiums and lyceums, where less orphans study.

Probably for the same reason, gymnasiums' teachers and educational managers possess little or no professional competencies to work with children in a socially dangerous situation, because a few children from this category study at gymnasiums.

4. Most respondents indicated lack of readiness to work with children from heterogeneous groups, the reasons for which may be different. In particular, the unpreparedness for successful work with gifted children may be reasoned by economic problems, which don't contribute to a student's participation in various developmental activities. The actuality of competencies to work with orphans is minimized under the influence of strong external circumstances such as the lack of perspectives for this problem solution. That is, very often there are external conditions that do not allow clearly awareness of the need for competencies for working with heterogeneous students' groups.

5. Lyceums and gymnasiums teachers demonstrate higher levels of both the needs and possessing of competencies for working with gifted students. Single-minded focus, specialized training and more rigorous selection of students are dominating in educational institutions of these types.

In general, at educational institutions of all types respondents' answers show an average degree of possessing of competencies for working with heterogeneous groups. Secondary school teachers more often have difficulties in working with gifted students as well as with students with disabilities. For example, in the question about the ability to identify similarities and differences in curriculum, requirements for learning outcomes for normally developing children and students with disabilities (special needs) 65.3% of secondary school teachers noted the necessity of this

competence, and only 22.2 % - of gymnasium teachers, 16.7% - of lyceum ones. The distribution is revealed in working with children with disabilities.

6. The group of social-and-personal competencies for working with heterogeneous groups was the most “vulnerable” because in many positions respondents did not note a high level of their development.

7. Comparison of the answers of teachers and educational managers concerning the academic competencies for working with heterogeneous students’ groups demonstrates that, in general, the view of these groups of respondents is the same.

For example, about working with migrant children teachers noted a fairly high level of need for a capacity to resolve conflicts on ethnic, religious or cultural grounds among students (required - 20.4%, preferably - 74.3% of respondents). At the same time, 80% of educational managers noted the obligatoriness of such skills.

8. Regarding the level of these competencies development, the evaluation of teachers and education managers are different. Teachers estimated this level as average (74%), while 16% of respondents noted lack of their ability to resolve conflicts on ethnic or religious grounds. 20% of the educational managers believe that teachers possess a high level of above mentioned skills, 50% - the average, and 30% found it difficult to assess the presence of these competencies at teachers.

In general, the results of a survey of educational managers’ and educators’ competencies and needs correlate, in a particular institution. Managers’ answers can explain the responses of teachers - at least with regards to external circumstances – about the problems in working with heterogeneous students’ groups.

9. The gymnasiums’ teachers showed themselves as the most “competent” for working with heterogeneous students’ groups - when compared to the level of possessing of all competencies (specified in the questionnaire), they show better results.

10. In the survey’s results, the particular interest is caused by forms and sources of professional development that teachers prefer to use for the acquisition of competencies in working with heterogeneous groups. The most popular form is the educational-methodical literature, teachers’ training courses, and methodical support by relevant experts.

Conclusions

Thus, the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the research was confirmed partially. The capacity of teachers and educational managers for working in the conditions of diversity is large enough. But, the majority of competencies are developed at the average level. In addition, at lyceums and gymnasiums, due to the conditions of “artificial” students’ homogeneous environment, teachers feel lower actuality for the competencies with regards to diversity pedagogics.

The most effective way for further development of teachers’ competencies for working with heterogeneous students’ groups is further education, in particular, teachers’ training courses and self-education by using special literature. Before this training the thorough pre-diagnosis of each students’ group must be made - what kind of competencies are needed by each teacher.

The need for the development of teachers’ competencies for working with heterogeneous groups in training courses is an important practice-oriented conclusion of this research.

Therefore, based on these conclusions, the project team of Dragomanov University has developed the thematic module “Diversity pedagogics and inclusion in education” and implemented it into practice of teachers’ training courses.

Since 2013, this module is taught as a separate topic in all programs for teachers’ training, regardless of specialty or the taught discipline. However, empirical experience and communication with listeners of these courses show the demand for development of a whole training program “Diversity pedagogics and inclusion in education”. It is planned to develop such program during 2016, it can be designed for 3 or 4 credits, 3 weeks of training.

Contents of the program should include the following issues.

1. The concept of inclusive education and educational integration. The history of the ideas and practices of inclusive education in the world and in Ukraine. Major international and domestic legal documents in the field of inclusive education and basic ideas.

2. The need for a broad interpretation of inclusion in education as the integration into the educational environment of all students, regardless of their characteristics, cultural, socioeconomic, psychophysiological and others. Diversity education concept. Providing equal access to education of heterogeneous groups: children of migrants, persons with disabilities, children from socially disadvantaged families, gifted students, children-“majors” and so on.

3. Features of inclusion at secondary education and in higher education. Competencies required by a teacher for successful work with heterogeneous groups. Key educational technologies for organization the teaching process in heterogeneous groups. Tools for diagnostic of different students’ special needs. Working with parents in the context of inclusive education. Advisory activities and consulting for the development of an inclusive educational environment.

4. An inclusive environment and corporate culture of an educational establishment. The main principles of inclusive socio-cultural and educational space set in international and domestic legal documents in the field of inclusive education. The role of a rector (director) and the institution’s policy in the development of inclusive education. Competencies required by educational manager for the successful organization of an inclusive environment at school. Conceptual understanding of diversity not as a problem but as a resource: the diversity of a staff significantly increases its potential for success.

5. A strategic approach to the development of inclusive education at a regional, city or the school level. The role of stakeholders in this process.

6. Inclusion in the workplace in the enterprise, organization, institution. The policy of non-discrimination, heterogeneity, inclusion on the examples of the British Council in Ukraine and others. The position of Coordinator for inclusion in the organization.

In general, in this segment of further teachers’ education - in the further training courses - a variety of innovations is most actively developed and implemented. It is due to the weakness of state standardization for training courses programs. Content of bachelor or master’s programs are clearly regulated by qualification characteristics, competencies fixed in the state standards of a profession – but in the teachers’ training programs it is more the issue for university autonomy. And this is great, because this factor stimulates competition between institutions that offer training services and it can result in increased quality of service.

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courses, to develop teachers who possess the positive attitudes, necessary skills, depth and breadth of content knowledge. MOE competencies framework for beginning teachers, using the three performance dimensions "professional practice, leadership & management and personal effectiveness. (Figure 3). Figure 3 : The Graduated Teacher Competencies Framework. The Diversity in Education course is aimed at teachers and educators who wish to develop their skills for participating in internationalisation activities at home (receiving foreign students and teachers, teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds) and abroad (international exchanges and p... Diversity in Education. Developing Intercultural and Communication Skills. ETI Courses Teacher Training Professional Development Courses. Introduction. Who is it for. Developing leadership for diversity and inclusion. High expectations and authority and educational establishments will comply with the general duty. The Dutch Constitution provides the legal basis for the civil rights of migrants including education and for their cultural rights (e.g. to participate in cultural life, to protect and develop cultural and linguistic identities, to create, etc.) National Policy.