Inclusive Education as a Framework for Changes in Teachers’ Work

Extended summary

In addition to improving school effectiveness and efficiency in the functioning of school systems, achieving equity and fairness in education is highlighted as one of the main objectives and the key content of the current reforms of contemporary school systems. The measures of global and national educational policies are, among other things, oriented towards the development and application of the theoretical and practical model of education aimed at competency development on one hand, and on the other hand, at the development of inclusive educational practice.

The success in implementing inclusive education depends on the measures of educational policy as well as on the changes in the structure of the teaching process, the school as the institution, and the school system. Teachers as key actors of school work, i.e., their professional work, represent a very important determinant of successful implementation of inclusive education and quality of school education as a whole.

The question of redefinition and reconceptualization of the role of teachers in the conditions of implementing inclusive education is analyzed in this paper. The changes in teachers’ work are explained by specifying and describing the jobs and activities of teachers which are
highlighted in expert sources as highly important in working with other key actors of inclusive education. Learners with developmental disabilities, learners of typical development, teachers and professional associates, and parents of learners with developmental disabilities are marked as key actors of school work. Attention is drawn to the listed categories since the focus of the implementation of inclusion in education so far has been on one dimension and component of this complex concept - the education of learners with disabilities in regular institutions.

If learners with developmental disabilities and learners of typical development are jointly educated in regular schools and classes, it can be said that the role of teachers in the teaching process is becoming more complex. Namely, in such conditions teachers are expected to equally successfully deliver the official curriculum for learners of typical development and to put an emphasis on the individualized teaching process in working with learners with developmental disabilities and to adequately provide the necessary additional support in and out of the classroom. Participation of teachers in the work of professional teams for inclusive education and for additional support to learners, as well as the achievement and development of specific aspects of cooperation with parents of different learner categories, are very complex and demanding tasks for teachers. If we bear in mind the existing school practice in our country, we can say that what appears to be a special challenge in the work of teachers is the task to work in a planned and systematic way on creating a supporting context for learning and development of learners, i.e., on building a positive and stimulating classroom and school environment and culture.

In order to successfully accomplish new and more complex tasks, teachers should be adequately prepared. Preparedness of teachers for the successful implementation of inclusive education must be the product of initial education and professional development of teachers designed and delivered to provide for the development of teachers’ competencies for professional action in inclusive school practice, as well as for the appropriate system of professional attitudes and beliefs about inclusion in education.

In the final part of the text we emphasize that for the development and broader practical implementation of the model of effective training of teachers for inclusive school practice it is necessary to move towards the development of teachers as reflective practitioners. In the context of inclusive education, reflection gives teachers the opportunity to: have a better insight into the advantages and limitations (challenges) of the existing inclusive school practice; re-examine and improve the quality of their own teaching with various learner categories; develop cooperation with colleagues and recognize the value of teamwork for the exchange and development of knowledge and experience and forming and redefining professional attitudes and beliefs about inclusive education; raise awareness and reconsider their own implicit theories on teaching and role of teachers. All of the above is an important assumption of successful professional action of teachers in inclusive school practice.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, inclusive school practice, the role of teachers, teachers’ work with different actors in inclusive education.
References


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