



UKRAINE

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Status of Inclusive Education in Ukraine

(i)

Today Ukraine does not have single terminology concerning the inclusive education. In the main legislative documents of Ukraine we can find such terms as: “children who need correction of mental and/or physical development” [3, 4]; and „persons with physical or mental disorders and are not capable to study” [5]. One of the recent documents – the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science “On Creation Favourable Conditions for Education of People with Disabilities” [9] uses the following set of terms: ‘youth with disabilities”, “children with severe impairments”, “children with limited abilities” and also “children with special educational needs”.

Three former terms refer to a medical model that focuses on an individual who needs fixing by therapy, medicine, surgery or special treatment [6]. It is naturally that public reaction in terms of medical model is to provide medical treatment, social care and rehabilitation services such as special education and pension. In other words, the target is to create opportunities for people with special needs to take part in the “normal” life of the community.

Since Ukraine ratified UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1991) [12] an ever growing role is assigned to social model, which is more associated with protection of human rights. In terms of social model health impairments are considered as social issue but not as human characteristics. Because this issue is caused by inadaptability of environment, including public attitude to people with special needs, job rates, transport and building access. Social model is aimed at building inclusive society and achieving education for all.

Non governmental organizations, including parents associations play a great role in promotion of the positive changes in Ukrainian society. Thanks to their active involvement the term “children with special needs” has come into use as a replacement for the terms with negative meaning like “disabled children”, “children with limited abilities”, “children with disorders in development” etc. At the same time some “label” terms like “mental defective” are still widely used.

In order to define term “inclusive education” the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) “Disabled children rights to quality education” project group analyzed definitions in main international documents such as: UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities [11], UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child [13], Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education [14], International Consultation on Early Childhood Education and Special Educational

Needs [7], and national documents – Program of Scientific and Pedagogical Experiment “Social Adaptation and Integration of Children with Special Needs in Regular Education System” [8].

To avoid misunderstanding the authors offer to use the following term based on Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action:

The fundamental principal of inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricular, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnership with their communities. There should be a continuum of special needs encountered in every school [14].

We should give preference to the term “inclusion” which is conceptually different to the term “integration”. In particular, International Consultation on Early Childhood Education and Special Educational Needs [7] asserts that „*integration* begins with the attempts to insert the child into existing classrooms and services. *Inclusion* is a policy and process that allows all children to participate in all programs”. Difference in approaches is based on recognition of the fact that society should be adapted to people’s needs, not vice-versa.

Placement of children to special classes within a school on a permanent basis may be considered as one form of integration but not inclusion. Practical experience of having children with special needs in the same school as other children but in separate classes shows that such environment is not favourable for communication of children with special educational needs and their peers. [7]

Physical integration of children with special needs into ordinary classes without getting any kind of special assistance also is not inclusion. Due to such type of integration many of children with special needs do not participate in learning process, lose motivation and finally drop out.

Taking into account all said above, we can claim that inclusion secures a child – centred approach aimed at taking full account of the individual needs of every child and ensuring the successful schooling for all children.

We can note the following critical aspects of the conceptualisation of inclusive education in our country:

- ❖ inclusive education is not a priority of education policy in Ukraine;
- ❖ education policy makers does not have understanding the differences between “inclusion” and “integration”;

- ❖ we have no real statistic data about number of children with special education needs.

In Ukraine the form of inclusive education was initiated by non governmental organizations (NGO). The groups to focus are children with special education needs (disabled children) and homeless children. Main sources are involving from international and local NGOs. For example:

- ❖ the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) project “Disabled children rights to quality education” (2005 – 2006), “Implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine (2007);
- ❖ Ukrainian Step by Step foundation jointly with the International Step by Step Association (NL) and the Every Child organization (UK) and with support of the Institution Building Partnership programme of the TACIS realized “Creating centres of Excellence for Inclusive Education of Children with disabilities in mainstream schools” project (2003 – 2004);
- ❖ TACIS project “Civic education in Ukraine” (part of this project is teaching children with special needs for civic education)(2004 – 2007);
- ❖ CIDA projects on inclusion for disabled and homeless children (2005 – 2007).

(ii)

On the base of research results “Disabled children right to quality education. Analysis of situation in Ukraine” [10], conducted by the IRF in 2005 - 2006, we can say that role of inclusive education in the curriculum change is very important because we have concrete advantages:

- ❖ children with special education needs have defined better preparation for the real world and better acceptance by the community for this children;
- ❖ rising of learning motivation of children with special needs and ability to learn more from typically developing children;
- ❖ inclusive education helps to develop positive attitude to children with special needs and their parents, prepares children without special needs to live in society where different need and abilities are recognized;
- ❖ analysis of advantages of inclusion for families of children with special needs show that they have more opportunity to communicate with families of typically developing children that is not possible in terms of special education.

In 2003-2004, Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation jointly with the International Step by Step Association (NL) and the Every Child Organization (UK) and with support of the Institution Building Partnership Programme of the TACIS Programme of the European Commission realized “Creating Centres of Excellence for Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools” project.

Impact of inclusive education was evaluated in 10 educational establishments of Ukraine. In general 1084 persons took part in the evaluation of the process of inclusion: 54 children with disabilities (aged five - ten years old), 31 teachers working in the inclusive classrooms (preschool and primary teachers, teachers` assistants, social pedagogues), 45

parents of children with disabilities, 892 parents of children without disabilities and 58 teachers not working in the inclusive classrooms, plus two school directors and two vice directors.

The analysis of observations, portfolios, psychological tests and teachers reports show that all the children involved in the project experienced positive changes in different spheres: the children learned to be more open to others, increased their interest in educational activities and communication; improved their relationships with their peers. They became more curious about the world around them, posed more questions, tried to express their opinion and explain their position.

All the children with disabilities during the project had significantly improved their learning skills, disclosed creative potential, and, to an extent, mastered the art of self-expression. Children works demonstrated that every child had made progress in math, writing skills and fulfilment of assignments. During project every child improved his\her feeling of self-worth with the help of involving children in various stimulating activities as drawing pictures, making things of clay, designing objects, creating stories, etc.

The positive changes were possible due to effective interaction of different categories of people: parents of children with special needs, teachers, assistants, and social workers. Their confidence, perseverance, patience, and readiness for systematic work ensured the successful foundation for positive changes. Most of the teachers received appropriate preparation to work in inclusive classes during seminars, trainings and roundtables. The parents of the children without disabilities and teachers from other classes also showed their positive attitude by defining benefits for both categories of children.

Special effort was put forth to change the organizational pattern of the classroom community life and learning conditions and environment to establish productive connections with other specialists and services. Considerable attention was devoted to psychological preparation of the parents of the children without special needs, to make them ready to accept that the children with special needs will study in the same class with their children. The classroom setting was completely changed and equipped to create special places for individual learning; a large amount of handouts and visual materials were prepared.

Among the most common reasons impeding inclusion development are: lack of qualified and experienced teachers, limited opportunities for training, and lack of special equipment and literature. One of the most negative factors is low society readiness to accept the idea of inclusion as an important factor for democratization of the civic community.

Svitlana Efimova, a teacher of Lviv In-Service Teachers Training Institute interviewed 110 teachers of primary schools. These respondents expressed their attitude to inclusive education. The analysis of responses shows that 83 per cent of respondents admit the fact that children with special education needs are capable to learning, but only 6 per cent think that these children should be integrated into regular classes, 20 per cent consider

that only those children with disabilities can be integrated who can learn at the same level with the other children, the other 74 per cent support the special education system [1,2]. The results of the questionnaire of children studying in inclusive classes (338 students were interviewed) show the high level of learning achievements of children with special needs and outline that these children feel comfortable in inclusive environment.

According to all the mentioned above, we can make conclusion that researches on inclusive education in Ukraine were mainly initiated by non-governmental organizations or by individual persons. We also recognize the necessity of State and public support of initiatives towards inclusive education.

Actually we are verging towards fundamental changes in education policy concerning children with special needs. The Draft of “Law”6218 On education of people with limited health abilities”, which is now actively discussed by Parliament Committee on education and science issues, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and NGOs can become the key provision of inclusive education implementation. In particular this document puts a priority on integrated and inclusive education (both terms are included in the document). Also this document vouches the parents rights to choose schools and curricula according to children needs, confirms the intention of the Ministry of Education to reform Psychological Medical Pedagogical Consultations into body that provides long-term examining of the child, individual programs of rehabilitation and consultation services for parents. It is planed that this new initiative will implemented with close cooperation of public, parents and international experts.

(iii)

The concept of inclusive education is not integrated in the curriculum structure of basic education in Ukraine. As I noted, Ukrainian education policy makers does not understand differences between “inclusion” and “integration”. Because “inclusion” is a new term for Ukraine and it is not included in any legal documents. Usually such terms as special education, integrated education were used in our national documents dealing with education people with disabilities. The main reason is a lack of information and popularization of the idea of inclusion and explaining the main principles of it. People usually understand that “inclusion” – when children with disabilities study with their peers in mainstream school and think that such children should adapt to society. Also we have historical heritage of the dual system of regular and special education. In Ukraine is still strong a policy for special education. It is developed in isolation form policies from the education system as a whole. Many times mainstream school are more or less used to transferring their problems to other parts of the school system, to the special schools.

The main obstacles to the general spread of inclusion are (15)

- Traditional thinking patterns of regular and special teachers and their resistance to change.

- Architectural barriers: many of the schools are not accessible for students with physical disabilities.
- Traditional ways of teaching in regular schools (achievement oriented whole class teaching, no interest in the learning process itself).
- Prejudice of teachers and parents of the classmates.
- Unprepared regular teachers (no adequate initial training and no or not enough courses on integration).
- Mistakes in the process of integration (methodical problems, quality of support, attitudes of the teachers, of the staff and of the leadership of the school).
- Limited resources for assigning support teachers.
- No or not enough specialized support teachers in a certain area.
- Uninterested parents who are not supportive and do not play an active role in the process of the child's integration.
- High class sizes in the regular school.
- The lack of early intervention.
- The increasing amount of theoretical, lexical knowledge on the secondary school level.

We have the experimental program “Social adaptation and integration into society of children with special needs through organizing their education in the regular classrooms” developed by the Ukrainian Step by Step foundation for primary school only. This program is realizing together with the Institute of Special Education with official support (not finance support!) of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2001 – 2007). The MoES has special notification as Order #586 from September 10, 2001 “On Conducting Experiment: Social Adaptation and Integration into Society of Children with Special Needs through Organizing their Education in the Regular Classrooms”. Experimental inclusive classes are organized differently. Teacher has an assistant. Teachers have not any financial support. They have just the methodological support from NGO Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation and Institute of Special Education (Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and Academy of Pedagogical Science as the main education “legislative bodies” tried to walk off existing system of special schools, inherited from former Soviet Union and made some efforts towards integration. In 2004 according to result of experimental program “ Social Adaptation and Integration into Society of Children with Special Needs through Organizing their Education in the Regular Classrooms” [8] 49 primary schools of 20 pilot secondary schools became inclusive and 178 children with special education needs were integrated into mainstream

schools. Also in Ukraine 6.3 thousand children with special education needs attend special classes in regular schools, which can be considered as form of integration.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has the pre-school, primary and special education Department for takes care of this question.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine reports that during 2005/2006 academic year 54,1 thousand children with special education needs have been receiving education in 396 special schools (see Table 1). According to the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2004 7716 children with special educational needs lived and studied in 56 boarding schools or internats.

Table 1. Number of special schools and number of children in special schools in Ukraine (2005/2006)

	Type of School	Number of schools	Number of children (thousand)
1	Boarding schools (schools) for children mental retardation	234	32,2
2	Boarding schools (schools) for blind children	6	0,8
3	Boarding schools (schools) for children with visual impairments	29	4,3
4	Boarding schools for deaf children	30	3,1
5	Boarding schools (schools) for children with hearing problems	27	3,2
6	Boarding schools for children with motor disorders	20	2,3
7	Boarding schools for children with severe speech disorders	16	3,1
8	Boarding schools (schools) for children with intellectual disabilities	34	5,1
	Total	396	54,1

In comparison with 2000/2001 academic year the number of special schools has grown from 391 to 396 schools. But enrolment in special schools has fallen from 61,2 to 54,1 thousand children. Decrease of enrolment in special education institutions may be explained that some children with special educational needs are integrated in general schools and study with their peers without any help.

Unfortunately, we have no statistics about number of children with special needs integrated into regular schools in Ukraine. It means that research on inclusive education in Ukraine is still at the beginning stage.

To our mind inclusive education is a way of democratising opportunities for life-long learning.

(iv)

For on-going process of inclusive education in Ukraine we should

- ❖ to change of education content (national educational standards and curriculum);
- ❖ to provide families support;

- ❖ to develop special support services and accessibility in the ordinary schools;
- ❖ to organize in-service training for educational staff;
- ❖ to change the Ukrainian legislation towards inclusion and develop of state inclusive education management system [10].

1. Content of Education: standards, curriculum

The guiding principle of the recommendations on education standards and curricula should be based on equal access to education for all children, which means that children with special education needs should receive additional support in the context of regular curriculum, not a special curriculum. Schooling children in special institutions should be recommended in infrequent cases for some children with special needs.

According to all the mentioned above we suggest:

- to develop guidelines for teachers with the examples of adjustment of curricula and education environment to children's needs, including knowledge about individual curricula.
- to develop evaluation methods and criteria guidelines in order to provide equal opportunity for children to express their learning achievements, to identify difficulties and assist pupils to overcome them.
- to develop flexible curricula in accordance with individual needs of children, which will allow using different forms and methods of education.
- to introduce a position of teacher's assistant in inclusive classes in order to implement child-centered program.
- to provide constant support for children with special educational needs, beginning with minimal help in regular classrooms upto additional learning support programs within the school and extending, where necessary, to the provision of assistance from specialists and external support staff.
- to use appropriate and affordable technologies in order to enhance success in the school curricula and to aid communication, mobility and learning.
- to promote role of school heads in making schools more responsive to children with special education needs by means of redeployment of instructional resources, diversification of learning options, mobilization of child-to-child help and development of close relations with parents and community.
- to rest responsibility on school heads for promotion of positive attitudes throughout the schools community and in arranging for effective cooperation between class teachers and support staff.
- to ensure that State education standard includes concept of inclusion. This will provide knowledge about diversity, develop cooperative skills, form feelings of tolerance and empathy.

2. Families support

Parental involvement in approbation and realization of inclusive programs is a key component of success in inclusion. It is necessary to encourage parents' desire to provide equal rights to education for their children despite of all the difficulties they meet.

The following actions should be taken:

- to provide access to all necessary information, consultation and rehabilitation services for families of children with special needs.
- to sustain the parents' ability to overcome their fears, prevent victimization and other psychological difficulties. To encourage families of children with special needs to improve their competence and develop co-operation with teachers and specialists in order to work together as equal partners.
- to form positive attitude and culture of Ukrainian families in order to create a favorable environment for child's development and creativity.
- to enhance parents' efforts in lobbying inclusive education, participation in planning, policy development and decision-making process concerning provision for special education needs.
- to create a powerful network of parents' associations and non governmental organizations for consulting and informational activities, popularization of good inclusive practices through mass media, in particular among families of typically developing children.

3. Special Support Services and Accessibility

Specific character of schooling children with special education needs is that they require additional rehabilitation services within regular curriculum. It is very important to coordinate work of teaching staff and specialists at the local level.

The following actions should be taken:

- to provide locally available special educational, medical and social services for children with special needs along with regular curriculum.
- to adjust the quality of special services (educational, medical and social) to international standards and demands.
- to provide rehabilitation and other special services according to individual child's needs within community and not far from school.
- if it is necessary (in case of motor disorders, traumas, anemia etc) to provide everyday transporting of children with special needs by specially equipped school buses or by other vehicles.
- to bring physical accessibility of school buildings and territory into compliance with access requirements for children with special needs. No new school buildings and territory must be approved and opened without complying with the requirements of access for children with special needs.
- to create and equip special rooms for rehabilitation and other special classes within school.
- to include materials about special educational needs, inclusive idea and practices training programs for special service providers in order to develop positive orientation toward inclusion.
- to develop and finance a system of regular in-service training programs (seminars, trainings etc.) for special service providers, who work in inclusive schools.

4. Training of Educational Staff

Appropriate training of educational staff stands out as a key factor in promoting progress towards inclusive education. It should be provided in the frames of pre-service, in-service teachers training system.

The following actions should be taken:

- to form positive attitude to inclusive education through pre-service and in-service teachers training programs, to orient teachers towards knowledge and skills requires for inclusive education, such as assessing special needs, adapting curriculum content, individualizing teaching process, collaboration with specialists and parents.
- to develop program on inclusive education (minimal course – 12 hours, advanced – 72 hours) and implement it into in-service teachers training institutes; to ensure that this course is taught by appropriate specialists.
- to take into account experience in inclusive schools during assessment of studies and teacher certification.
- to develop methodological recommendations, organize seminars for school administrators in order to develop their capacity to provide leadership in this area and to support and train teaching staff.
- to involve universities in advisory work in the process of developing special needs education, especially as regards research, preparation of teacher trainers and designing training programs and materials. It is very important to promote networking with universities having inclusive education experience.
- to provide special training for local education authorities to develop their capacity to support teaching staff in inclusive schools.

5. Changes in Legislation Towards Inclusion and Development of State Inclusive Education Management System

Legislation should create favorable background for reforming and successful realization of Education for All principle.

The following actions should be taken:

- to adjust legislation in Ukraine to international demands concerning children's right to education.
- to include the philosophy and idea of inclusive education into legislation, to prevent all forms of discrimination, limitation and to ensure the right to live in family or communicate with peers.
- to provide public involvement into process of development and discussion of legislative documents. No legal documents regarding disabled children rights can be approved without public discussion.
- to provide educational services for children with special needs in all educational institutions and supply with all equipment, additional resources, teaching and special staff according to children's needs. In some cases (in accordance with parents' will) children with special needs may study at special schools.

- to legitimate right to education for all children with special needs, including severe disabilities and create favorable conditions for child's development. Different forms of education, such as ability and correctional education should be studied.
- to exterminate "labeled" approach in assessment of children special needs. The diagnostic services should not put obstacles to education for children with special needs. Assessment bodies must not make any decisions against parents will or children's needs.
- to implement the principle "money for the child" of legal financing of education for children with special needs according to individual rehabilitation programs and curriculum.
- to provide changes towards inclusion not only in specialized documents but in all legislative system. First and foremost to reconsider the following Laws of Ukraine: "On Education" (1991), "On Pre-School Education" (2001), "On Secondary Education" (1999), "On Vocational Education" (1998), "On Higher Education" (2002), "On Fundamentals of Social Protection of Invalids of Ukraine" (1991), "On Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities of Ukraine" (2005).
- to create a department in the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine aimed at management of special needs education system and coordination of local educational authorities activities towards inclusion. This department should be provided with qualified specialists in special needs education. To create appropriate departments in local education authorities and in-service teachers training institutes.
- to allocate money and provide researches focusing on special needs education, teaching of children with severe disorders.

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