Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education in School

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The work is aimed at identifying the attitude of teachers of general schools to inclusive education. The article presents the results of an empirical study obtained on a sample of teachers of Chelyabinsk (N=678). The study involved respondents aged 20 to 77 years, of which 94% were female and 6% male. The study included the study of three aspects of attitude: modality, character and position. A mass online survey was used, conducted using the Internet service "Yandex. Forms". The results obtained allow us to say that teachers demonstrate a predominantly positive attitude towards inclusion (63,8%), regardless of their length of service and participation in the implementation of adapted educational programs. It is noted that the attitude towards inclusive education is characterized by the unwillingness of teachers to take a responsible positior; weak desire to interact with parents; low readiness to improve their qualifications in matters of inclusion.

Keywords: inclusive education; mass school; teachers; children with disabilities; quality of inclusive education.

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Отношение педагогов к инклюзивному образованию в школе

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Представлены результаты эмпирического исследования, направленного на выявление отношения педагогов массовых школ к инклюзивному образованию. Материалы получены на выборке педагогов г. Челябинска (N=678). В исследовании приняли участие респонденты в возрасте от 20 до 77 лет, из которых 94% были женского пола, 6% — мужского. Работа охватывала изучение трех аспектов отношения: модальности, характера и позиции. Использовался массовый онлайн-опрос, проведенный с помощью интернет-сервиса «Яндекс. Формы». Полученные результаты позволяют говорить о том, что педагоги демонстрируют преимущественно положительное отношение к инклюзии (63,8%) вне зависимости от стажа их работы и участия в реализации адаптированных образовательных программ. Отмечается, что отношение к инклюзивному образованию характеризуется неготовностью педагогов занимать ответственную позицию; слабым желанием взаимодействовать с родителями; невысокой готовностью повышать квалификацию в вопросах инклюзии.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование; массовая школа; педагоги; дети с ограниченными возможностями здоровья; качество образования.

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Introduction

Inclusive education goes the way of its formation in the Russian Federation, from the definition of its ideology, goals, and values [13; 15] to the formation of the regulatory framework [16] and the development of organizational and methodological aspects [1; 2; 9; 17]. The implementation of inclusion ideas in practice faces personnel, organizational and managerial, methodological, and psychological problems [5; 12] in Russia (see [6; 8; 12], etc.) and in other countries of the world [21]. This is due to the presence of personnel, organizational and managerial, methodological, and psychological problems [5; 12].

Russian and foreign authors recognize that the success of inclusive education depends on all actors: teachers, children with special healthcareneeds (children with special needs), their parents, and school management [9; 12; 17; 26]. At the same time, researchers assign one of the important roles to teachers [3; 4; 6; 29] and study their attitude toward the idea of inclusion (L.V. Goryunova [5], E. N. Morgacheva [14]) and readiness to implement it in practice (S.V. Alekhina, Yu.V. Melnik, E. V. Samsonova, and A.Yu. Shemanov [1]), teachers' assessment of their place in inclusive education (L.M. Volosnikova, S. V. Ignatzheva [4]), etc.

Researchers study educators' attitudes towards inclusive education using different criteria. For example, attitudes towards inclusion and special children (modality of attitude: positive, negative, neutral). Influence factors are another criterion. The attitude towards inclusive education can be assessed by the position taken by teachers (active or passive position in the implementation of the educational process).

Surveys filled by teachers of the Sverdlovsk and Orenburg regions, Moscow, Tyumen, Ivanteevka, etc. [4; 6; 12; 14 et al.], conducted in the last ten years by Russian researchers, showed that, in general, teachers (93.3%) agree with the idea of inclusion [12]. However, most of them (E.N. Morgacheva, 2013; Yu.A. Koroleva, 2016), or about half of them (E.V. Grunt, 2017) had negative and/or neutral attitude towards the process of inclusive education. At the same time, according to researchers, some teachers did not express their disagreements directly but rather in a veiled form. In this, scientists see a contradiction between teachers' understanding of the importance of implementing inclusive education and their unwillingness to face difficulties in their work or to change something in their professional activities, especially if there is no additional payment, since they consider work with children with special healthcare needs as an additional burden [4; 12; 14]. As a result, S.V. Alekhina and co-authors noted that teachers mostly agree about the values of inclusion, but not about its organizational and activity foundations [1].

Many factors influence educators' attitudes towards inclusive education. Among them are teachers' special (correctional) or specialized education, age, location, and school status. Researchers note that teachers with special education are more likely to be positive about inclusion (J.Yu. Brook, G.V. Patrusheva et al.; D. Iliško, J. Badjanova, S. Ignatjeva) [3; 22], and young teachers; less often subject teachers, especially those working in high school (P. Engelbrechtetal, T. Saloviita) are positive about it [20; 26]. In addition, teachers from big cities and from schools with a high status (gymnasiums, lyceums) are less loyal to inclusive education [6].

E.V. Grunt believes that teachers' positive assessment of inclusive education is more often associated with the process of teaching children with special healthcare needs, and a negative assessment is associated with teachers' own teaching activities and the problems which arise during the implementation of inclusive education in educational institutions [6]. A.L. Perrin, M. Jury, and C. Desombre consider teachers' personal values, self-attitude, and openness to change to be the sources of teachers' positive attitude [25]. M.P. Opoku, A.N. Jiya, R.C. Kanyinji and W. Nketsia attribute satisfaction with teachers' own activities [24].

One of the key factors influencing the positive attitude of teachers towards inclusive practice are the effective management of the organization (A. A. Dubov, G. B. Glazkova [7]) and the position of the school principal promoting inclusive policies (E. Cohen [19]; N. Khaleel, M. Alhosani, and I. Duyar [23]), in making constructive management decisions (S.V. Alekhina, Yu.V. Melnik, E.V. Samsonova [1; 2]).

Among factors causing a negative attitude towards inclusion are misunderstanding of the essence of inclusion, rejection of it, a low level of readiness for its implementation, a negative attitude towards students with disabilities, a lack of experience working with these children [4; 5; 6; 12; 14 et al.]; and susceptibility to stereotyping of children with special needs [12]. Researchers attribute the lack of personal resources to solve problems that arise in the work [8] to the number of significant factors affecting the attitude of teachers toward the implemented inclusive practice. This puts teachers' focus on skills' development to address the lack of inclusive training [6; 10; 11; 15] and increase inclusive competence [13].

The researchers studied the attitude of teachers to inclusive education, their assessment of their place (role) in it. On the one hand, they found that teachers have high social responsibility, which is expressed in the recognition of the importance of inclusive model in a mass school [6]. On the other hand, studies have shown that the problems that teachers call indicate their passive position [14] and low subjectivity in the inclusive educational process [13]. Studies have shown the dependence of teachers' assessment on their own effectiveness, job satisfaction, and inclusion in the inclusive educational process [18].

The attention of the scientific community to the issues of teachers' assessment of inclusive education, as well as empirical data collected in different years (2013, 2016, 2017, 2019), testifying the attitude of teachers to inclusion, made it possible to formulate the goal of this study which is to identify the attitude of teachers of mass schools to inclusive education at the present stage of its formation.

Research methodology and methods

The activity approach and constructivism served as the foundational methodologies for this study. There are several reasons for selecting the constructivist paradigm. Firstly, it allows the recognition of each individual involved in the inclusive education process as an active participant in creating both an inclusive educational environment and teacher's own identity. Secondly, constructivism emphasizes the importance of considering the subjective opinions of all participants regarding inclusive education, self-perception, and their social partners. These opinions are essential determinants in shaping one's own engagement and activities. The activity approach was used to assess the teacher's activities in inclusive education and its reflective

component in assessing the inclusive practice of a modern mass school.

The activity approach was employed to evaluate teachers' practices in inclusive education and the reflective component related to assessing inclusive practices in modern mass schools.

To gather empirical data, we conducted a mass online survey in June 2023 using Yandex Forms. This survey was organized at the request and with the assistance of the Chelyabinsk Education Committee.

The authors developed a questionnaire for the survey, which consisted of nine questions designed to assess various aspects of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. These aspects included:

1. The modality of teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in mass schools, considering two factors: participation in adapted educational programs and work experience.

2. The nature of educators' attitudes towards inclusion, which was assessed through educators' evaluations of:

2.1. Factors that could improve the quality of inclusive education in a mass school, such as the establishment of a support system for inclusive education, a multi-level structure that integrates school administration, support services, and teaching staff, and the creation of a dedicated support service comprising specialists who facilitate the successful implementation of inclusive education.

2.2. The organization of work related to inclusive education within the school, as well as the challenges faced in executing inclusive practices in a mass school, along with their suggestions for improving these practices.

3. The necessity for training in inclusive education, which serves as an indicator of educators' willingness to actively and effectively engage in this area.

A total of 678 teachers from schools in Chelyabinsk, ranging in age from 20 to 77 years, participated in the survey. Their work experience varied significantly, spanning from several months to 56 years. The majority of respondents, 68.3%, have been working as teachers for more than 10 years. Regarding gender distribution among the respondents, 94% were female and 6% were male. In terms of job positions, 77% of the participants were employed as teachers, while 23% hold leadership roles (12.1% were in one type of leadership position, and 10.9% in another). Additionally, 468 participants, representing 69%, were involved in the implementation of inclusive education.

The statistical analysis of the survey results was conducted using Pearson's chi-squared test. For 2x2 tables, Yates' correction was applied.

Study results

The study revealed that a majority of the surveyed teachers (63.8%) support inclusion in education. Among these supporters, over half (51.3%) see it as a promising approach. However, a significant portion of respondents (25.2%) hold a negative opinion, deeming inclusion unviable, while 10.9% perceive it as merely a bureaucratic endeavor.

Of the teachers implementing adapted educational programs (AEP), 46.6% maintain a positive attitude towards the introduction of inclusive education. A slightly smaller proportion (43.9%) of teachers not involved in inclusive practices share this favorable perspective. Notably, the factor of participation or non-participation in the implementation of AEP does not significantly influence teachers' acceptance or rejection of the concept of inclusion in schools.

Interestingly, among those working under adapted programs, nearly twice as many are indifferent or have a negative stance towards inclusion: 22.4% of those involved in AEP express indifference or negativity, compared to 13.7% of those not involved (Table 1).

The results of our study indicate that the variable 'work experience' does not influence attitudes towards inclusive education ($\chi 2 = 1.6$; p = 0.76; V = 3). The proportions of individuals who view the implementation of inclusion in a mainstream school positively and negatively are approximately the same across all groups.

The factor of participation in implementing adapted educational programs also appears to have no effect on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Among those who implement these programs, 46.6% have a positive view, compared to 43.9% of those who do not. However, it is noteworthy that among those working on adapted programs, nearly twice as many express negative or indifferent attitudes (22.4% of participants versus 13.7% of non-participants).

The second research objective was to explore teachers' perspectives on participating in the inclusive educational process and to evaluate their roles within it. Analysis of teachers' assessments concerning factors that enhance the quality of inclusive education revealed that over half prioritize a support system for inclusive education that is established within the educational organization. Additionally, more than a third recognize the importance of the school support service. The work of the school administration was identified as the third most crucial factor, while teachers viewed their own activities and those of specialists as the least significant (Table 2).

Table 1

Research Variables	School e	School Experience and AEP Implementation			
Attitude of IE	More Than 10 Years of Ser- vice (n = 463)	Less Than 10 Years of Ser- vice (n = 215)	Implements AEP (n = 468)	Does Not Implement AEP (n = 210)	
Very positive	54 (11,7%)	31 (14,4%)	70 (10,3%)	15 (2,2%)	
Positive in Perspective	238 (51,4%)	110 (51,2%)	246 (36,3%)	283 (41,7%)	
Negatively	119 (25,7%)	52 (24,2%)	112 (16,5%)	59 (8,7%)	
Indifferently	52 (11,2%)	22 (10,2%)	40 (5,9%)	34 (5%)	

Educators' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education (IE) by Seniority and AEP Implementation (n = 678)

Table 2

Research Variables		Attitudes Towards IE				
		Indifferently (n=74)	Negative (n=171)	Positive in Perspective (n=348)	Very positive (n=85)	
Factors Affecting the Quality of IE	School-built System	35 (47,3%)	74 (43,3%)	196 (56,3%)	49 (57,6%)	
	Teachers	4 (5,4%)	19 (11,1%)	19 (5,5%)	8 (9,4%)	
	Specially Created Subdivision	28 (37,8%)	61 (35,7%)	108 (31%)	16 (18,9%)	
	School Administration	7 (9,5%)	17 (9,9%)	25 (7,2%)	12 (14,1%)	

Attitudes of Educators towards Factors Improving the Quality of Inclusive Education (IE) (n = 678)

There is a clear connection between the opinions of individuals who influence the quality of the inclusive educational process and the attitudes of teachers towards it ($\chi 2 = 20.6$; p = 0.015; V = 9). Those with a positive view on inclusive education tend to have an optimistic perspective on its future and are more likely to support the inclusive education framework implemented in their schools.

Conversely, individuals who are indifferent or have negative attitudes toward inclusion more frequently identify the structural support units as critical for enhancing the quality of the inclusive educational process. Teachers who are enthusiastic about inclusive education also tend to value the role of school administration more highly. However, no category of teachers considers administration a significant factor in this context. Instead, respondents generally perceive administrative efforts as unimportant, resulting in the lowest percentage of support across all categories.

Furthermore, most respondents express a positive view regarding the involvement of parents of children with special needs in the organization of inclusive education. About 60% of respondents believe that full interaction with parents is essential, while 30.4% see such cooperation as having certain limitations. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that 9.6% of teachers outright deny the importance of parental participation in inclusive education.

Analysis of teachers' suggestions for improving inclusive education allowed us to prioritize the issues. The most significant issue identified was the lack of motivation and incentives for teachers to work in mixed-ability classes. Second on the list was the problem of parents' resistance or misunderstanding of their child's individual needs. Lack of adequate facilities (inclusive environment) in schools came third. Fourth and fifth were issues related to communication between school staff and parents about education in mixed classes, as well as communication issues between parents and their children with special needs about the content and organization of the curriculum. Other issues included the organization of integrated education for typical and special needs students, and the need for improved normative support for educational programs.; The absence or inefficiency of a management structure that organizes inclusive education in schools, as well as the lack of a specialized team to support the inclusive process, are two major challenges that need to be addressed.

Teachers have been using their own methods to address the issue of implementing inclusion in mass schools. 36 respondents mentioned "the lack of opportunities for teachers to follow sanitary rules and provide an individual approach in high-capacity classes," "lack of methodological support for implementing such an educational process where it is necessary to pay attention to all students (strong, ordinary, and weak) in just 40 minutes," and "the recommendatory nature of conclusions from psychological, medical, and pedagogical commissions." They also mentioned difficulties in teachers implementing the educational process in large classes (more than 30 students) without a tutor.

Teachers offered the following options for solving the problems of inclusive education:

1. Development and implementation of an inclusive management system in the school's activities (with the possibility of creating a separate unit in the management structure).

2. Correction of the work of support services, taking into account the features of inclusive education.

3. Organization of an individual approach to the education and upbringing of children with disabilities through the development of the tutoring institute.

4. Organization of systematic work with parents, from explaining the goals and objectives of inclusive education to include parents in active participation for its implementation.

5. Improving the qualifications of teachers in teaching children according to adapt programs and organizing extracurricular activities for healthy children and children with disabilities.

6. Development of a system of material incentives for teachers working on adapted programs.

7. Regulation of the number of children in mixed classes (downward).

At the same time, some respondents suggested either removing children with special needs from regular classes or organizing interaction between children with special needs and other children only in extracurricular activities. They argued that co-education in mixed classes slows down the learning process. These proposals can be seen as unconstructive, as they indicate a rejection of inclusive education by some respondents and a lack of understanding of the importance of teachers' work in creating an inclusive culture.

Another research task was to determine the need for additional training in inclusive education (Table 3).

Only half of the teachers in the sample felt the need for special training to work in an inclusive educational setting. At the same time, teachers with more than 10 years of experience talked about this need more often ($\chi^2 = 5.4$, p = 0.02, V = 1). It is worth noting that courses on inclusive education are currently being organized in all regions of Russia. It is possible that the study participants had already taken these courses, which influenced their assessment of the need for additional training in this area. This aspect was not specifically addressed during the survey.

Teachers expressed their desire to improve their skills in various aspects. Several areas were identified as being particularly important, including:

1) understanding the essence of inclusive education,

2) organizing the learning process in mixedability classes,

3) providing psychological, medical, and pedagogical support for students with special needs,

4) developing methodological approaches to inclusive teaching,

5) establishing effective communication and collaboration in inclusive settings.

Discussion

The data we have collected suggests that, in general, the teachers interviewed support the concept of inclusive education. This finding aligns with the conclusions of other research teams (see [1; 4], etc.). A comparison of do-

Table 3

	Exper	Experience		
Research variables		< 10 years > 10 years (n=215) (n=463)		
Need for Advanced Training in TS Problems	Need	123 (57,2%)	219 (47,3%)	
	Do Not Need	92 (42,8%)	244 (52,7%)	

Need for Training in Inclusive Education (n=678)

mestic studies from 2013, 2016, 2017, and 2019 (see [1; 4; 6; 12; 13], etc.) reveals an increasing number of educators who have a positive outlook on inclusion.

T. Saloviita indicated that less experienced teachers tend to be more optimistic about inclusive education [27]. However, our study found no significant difference in attitudes toward inclusive education among teachers with varying levels of work experience; their views appeared to be quite similar.

Unlike both foreign and Russian researchers who have established a connection, we were unable to identify any correlation between attitudes towards inclusive education and the implementation of adapted programs in our study [2; 10; 18].

The results of our investigation support the previously observed fact that a considerable number of teachers view their participation in inclusive education as an additional burden (L.M. Volosnikova, Yu.A. Koroleva, E.N. Morgacheva, H. Gunn rsd ttir, I.A. J hannesson, T. Saloviita) (see [4; 12; 14; 21; 26], etc.). We believe that this perspective on inclusion is a key reason why teachers identify the lack of a systematic approach to motivation and incentives for working in mixed-ability classes as a primary issue.

The feedback from teachers regarding the crucial factors for implementing systematic work in inclusive education highlighted the need for a supportive structural unit. However, this perspective did not align with findings from foreign studies (H. Gunnþórsdóttir, I.A. Jóhannesson [21], N. Khaleel, M. Alhosani, I. Duyar [23], A.L. Perrin, M. Jury, C. Desombre [27]), which emphasized the pivotal role of school directors and the promotion of inclusive policies.

Conversely, our survey reaffirmed the significant role of parents, particularly as partners in the educational process, a notion that was also echoed in other studies [11].The data on teachers' rejection of themselves as active, significant participants in the inclusive educational process are consistent with the results of studies that noted that subject teachers (especially those working in high school), and most of all, teachers with special education and primary school teachers (P. Engelbrecht et al.) [20], T. Saloviita [26]. At the same time, with the existing opinion of researchers on advanced training as an important factor in improving the guality of inclusive education [4; 15] and as a resource for teachers to overcome difficulties in this process [8], the results of our survey showed that with the problems identified by teachers and gaps in knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of inclusive practice, only half of the respondents feel the need to improve their gualifications in this direction (more often teachers with short work experience are Focused on this). This discrepancy highlights the importance of targeted professional development opportunities for educators to effectively support inclusive education practices. It is essential for schools and educational institutions to provide ongoing training and support to ensure all teachers are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to create inclusive learning environments. This is due, from our point of view, to a certain conservatism of teachers. It also depends on teachers' experience working with inclusive education and, possibly, on a negative experience, on the "habit" of working only with children without special healthcare needs. A small part of the respondents noted that they hope that the implementation of inclusion in a mass school will fail, and this process "will go back" to correctional educational institutions [6; 12].

Conclusion

The results of our study enable us to make the following statements:

1) A significant majority of the surveyed teachers (63.8%) express a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

2) Participation in the implementation of adapted educational programs and relevant work experience does not influence the quality of the attitude.

3) Among teachers who work with adapted programs, the number of those who have negative perceptions of inclusion is twice as high, indicating potential issues within this process.

4) The results we obtained suggest that teachers may have a low level of readiness to act as active participants in the inclusive educational process. In particular, many teachers do not see themselves as significant contributors to improving the quality of inclusive education. Conversely, those teachers who maintain a positive attitude towards inclusion consider the support system established at their school to be a key factor in this process. However, support services that demonstrate indifference or negativity towards inclusion are perceived as a limitation rather than an asset.

5) A significant majority (90.4%) of the teachers we surveyed recognize parents as participants in the inclusive educational process. However, not all teachers are prepared to engage with parents as equal partners or involve them in the upbringing of children with special needs; only 40% feel ready to interact.

6) The challenges facing an inclusive educational process, as identified by teachers, along with their proposals for improvement, reveal a primary concern regarding the material support for their activities. However, despite these concerns, teachers more frequently emphasize the need to enhance organizational and managerial aspects. The presence of unconstructive suggestions indicates that some respondents are resistant to inclusive educa-

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7) The teachers participating in our study exhibit a lack of interest in professional development opportunities: nearly half of the respondents (47.8%) believe they do not require additional training on inclusion issues. This perspective among a significant proportion of teachers suggests that they do not perceive this area as a deficiency in their professional competence or as essential for their improvement.

8) The implementation of inclusive education in contemporary mass schools and the training of teachers in this context clearly require further research. Such studies could enhance the representativeness of the sample by including interviews with teachers from various regions and yield more precise results. It would be beneficial to introduce additional variables into the study, such as "teachers' work in different types and levels of education", "teachers' workload", "subjects taught", and "class sizes". It's also recommended to expand the methodologies by including qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups.

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