

Teacher training on inclusive education: Estonian experience

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Main topics of the current presentation:

1. Belarussian and Estonian shared historical and pedagogical background
2. The principles of inclusive education
3. Estonian lessons and further perspectives
4. Recommendations for the development of *Belarussian* teacher training programs

1. Belarussian and Estonian shared historical and pedagogical background :

- the orientation of the educational system to provide individual support for students with SEN mainly in segregated or isolated institutions (special schools)
- some students were declared as „non teachable“ persons (modest and severe mental retardation)
- special programs and study materials (textbooks, workbooks)
- special training programs for special teachers
- no intentions to inclusive pedagogy and classroom for all students approach in the past history

2. The principles of inclusive education

- legalized on 2010, - considerable changes in:

a) **Estonian Occupational Qualification Standard (OQS): Teacher, Level 7**

enacts the set of competences for teachers related to inclusion and support for students with SEN

- **Chapt Work Units:** Compulsory units + Elective areas of work: support for students with SEN (identification, accommodation, development support, cooperation)
- **Chapt Competences:** Mandatory competences + Optional competences: Supporting a learner with SEN in the learning process (terminology, accommodation of environment, setting goals and planning learning activities, assesses her/his competence, initiates and cooperates with other specialists)

2. The principles of inclusive education

b) teacher training curricula – focusing more and more on IE requirements.

➤ **Tallinn University pre-school and teacher training programs:**

- IE and SEN students objectives integrated into subjectives
 - mandatory subjectes
 - elective subjectes
 - special modules
 - options to select subjects from other curricula (special education)
- **All SEN objectives and learning outcomes are consistent to OQS: Teacher, Level 7**

2. The principles of inclusive education

b) teacher training curricula – focusing more and more on IE requirements.

➤ **Tartu University teacher training programs:**

- mandatory subject Inclusive Education in all teacher training areas (curricula)
- mandatory elective subjects

➤ **All SEN objectives and learning outcomes are consistent to OQS: Teacher, Level 7**

3. Estonian lessons and further perspectives

- permanent development of initial and in-service teacher training curricula
- curriculum development is linked to OQS: Teacher.
- ongoing projects in cooperation with colleagues from other countries (in-service training and master`s program Inclusive Education project, Norway)
- the attitudes, knowledge and skills of every teacher are crucial to the implementation of inclusive education, NB! lack of support specialists in the field
- cooperation with local authorities and parents is essential in the context of IE

4. Recommendations for the development of teacher training programs *based on Estonian experiences*

The recommendations base on the *listed* documents bellow:

- Кодекс Республики Беларусь об образовании
- Концепция развития инклюзивного образования лиц с особенностями психофизического развития в Республике Беларусь
- План мероприятий по реализации в 2016 - 2020 годах Концепции развития инклюзивного образования лиц с особенностями психофизического развития в Республике Беларусь
- Учебные планы и программы дошкольного педагогического образования.
- Учебные планы и учебные программы для специалистов по поддержке.

4. Recommendations for the development of teacher training programs *based on Estonian experiences*

As a result of the documentary analysis the recommendations have been structured into 3 areas:

1. The main principles of teacher education related to inclusive education.
2. Analysis and recommendations for the pre-school teacher education training curriculum.
3. Analysis and recommendations for support specialists study programs.

4. Recommendations: teacher training programs (1).

1. Include or integrate the following compulsory subjects

1.1. Inclusive education: main topics of the course :

- The definition and meaning of IE. Indicators of inclusive education. Inclusive school culture.
- Diversity and social justice
- Special educational needs within the legislative framework.
- Resources supporting IE.
- Inclusive learning environment. Universal design. IT tools.
- Support system and collaboration. Advising parents. Teamwork.
- Inclusive pedagogy. Proven strategies in implementation of IE.
- Collecting and analysing data to assess the quality of IE.

1.2. Learning and development of special educational needs children.

1.3. Supporting students with learning or developmental difficulties.

1.4. Social and emotional skills in the classroom or group.

4. Recommendations: teacher training programs (1).

1.2. Learning and development of special educational needs children.

- The main aim of the course should be creating a readiness for planning, analysing and developing the learning environment and its activities for all students, while taking into account the cognitive processes and supporting their development.

1.3. Supporting students with learning or developmental difficulties.

- Teachers should have competences to notice and identify students' learning difficulties in their classroom and know their possible causes, assess of students' learning to learn competences, reading, writing, and math skills.

1.4. Social and emotional skills in the classroom or group.

- The aim of this course should be to develop teachers' skills in structuring and guiding the teaching process with students of different ages and with different developmental needs; to shape the understanding of the importance of emotionally and socially secure classroom climate and develop skills for creating a secure classroom climate.

4. Recommendations: teacher training programs (1).

2. Elective courses for different themes like specific disabilities, gifted children, students with different cultural or language background etc should be available during studies.
3. Theory should be closely related to practice, ie teacher education students should have possibilities enough to practice they have learnt during the study process. The main problem seems to be in teacher training generally that initial teacher education is too theoretical. It is therefore important that continuous pedagogical practice also includes support for children with special needs in an inclusive classroom.
4. Taking into account the circumstance that most of the working teachers have not be trained in the field of inclusive education all above mentioned themes and courses should
5. be available in-service teacher training for the purpose to support their personal professional development.
6. Modernization the teacher training courses will also require the professional development of teacher educators, their common understanding about the meaning of inclusive education and effective inclusive classroom practices.

4. Recommendations: preschool teacher training programs (2)

Comment: very comprehensive approach to different areas of development in the pre-school teacher training curriculum. Impressive detailed description of each area of child development.

Competences in 3 main areas:

1. Awareness of the principles of implementing inclusive education.

2. Teachers' skills to adapt the learning process.

- designing the learning environment according to the needs and development of the learner, providing learning support and success; develops and implements individual development plans

3. Counselling skills

- Counsels' and mentors' parents and colleagues in supporting the learner in the learning process;

4. Recommendations: support specialists' training programs (3)

Comment: reflected curricula have high professional quality and long history of support specialists' preparation in Belarus.

The main responsibilities of support specialists in IE:

- collaborating with parents, teachers and other support specialists to identify the need for assistance and support for the student and assesses the student's development and coping with the specialty competency in the learning environment;
- supporting and directing the student in learning process
- if necessary, cooperating with the medical, rehabilitation, social and other specialists in providing the necessary support to the student.

4. Recommendations: support specialists' training programs (3)

Support specialists' in-service and pre-service training should be reviewed and following subjects amended:

- the meaning of inclusive education and effective strategies of its implementation
- counselling skills with other specialists, teachers and parents
- cooperation skills with other specialists and teachers, included co-teaching skills.

Also recommended to modernize the special education terminology and to use the terminology that reflects contemporary views and which is consistent with the experience and practice of other countries. For example „special teacher“ instead of „oligophenopedagogue“ etc.

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