
The Eco-Psychological Approach: Designing Parent Education and Support Programs in an Inclusive School

Albina A. Nesterova ^{1*}, Nigina S. Babieva ², Aleksandr V. Grinenko ³,
Irina E. Sokolovskaya ⁴, Natalia A. Krasheninnikova ⁵, Inna V. Merenkova ²

¹ Moscow Region State University, Moscow, RUSSIA

² Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, Moscow, RUSSIA

³ MGIMO-University, Moscow, RUSSIA

⁴ Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, RUSSIA

⁵ Ulyanovsk State University, Ulyanovsk, RUSSIA

* Corresponding author: anesterova77@rambler.ru

Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of increasing the effectiveness of a psychologist's educational activities with parents in an inclusive school. It has been proposed to use the guidelines of the eco-psychological approach for designing programs for work with students' parents. The main point of these guidelines is the organization of the subject-generating interaction in the educational environment. The author presents the experience of designing and implementing the work program of the parent club, taking account of the main provisions and principles of the eco-psychological approach, aimed at developing students' adaptation resources.

Keywords: professional standard of a teacher, eco-psychological education, parents, children with limited abilities, inclusive education

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the professional standard of a teacher- psychologist (psychologist in the field of education), one of the most important of his work functions is psychological education of the educational process subjects regarding the support of people with limited abilities, children and students who have difficulties in mastering general educational programs, developing and social adaptation. In an inclusive school, parents of schoolchildren act as especially significant subjects involved in the educational process, whose activity the effectiveness of inclusive education as a whole largely depends on. The psychologist of an inclusive school is faced with the task of involving parents (legal representatives) in the work to support students who have difficulty in developing educational programs in social adaptation, which requires that the psychologist should develop and implement programs to improve the psychological competence of parents.

The practice of educational activities, organized in the traditional paradigm of giving talks at parental meetings and seminars on the problems of organizing

inclusive education, is poorly effective. Therefore, we have made an attempt to design educational programs for parents of students of an inclusive school based on the system-activity paradigm that is in demand in contemporary education and the eco-psychological approach that is actively developed today in educational psychology (Efimova et al. 2015, Kalenik et al. 2018, Kislyakov et al. 2017, Kuznetsova et al. 2018, Lopatkova et al. 2018, Miroshkin et al. 2018, Panov 2007, Salakhova et al. 2018, Shulga et al. 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The eco-psychological approach presupposes the focus of education on the provision of opportunities to socialize students in accordance with the age stages of development and residence, with individual needs, with life values in society; opportunities for the formation of the subjective position of the student and the development of his subjective qualities; opportunities to include children and adults in various types of joint activities that contribute to the development of all aspects of the psyche: not only cognitive, but also physical, emotional, personal, spiritual, including the

ability to regulate their actions and states. The leading significance is given to nature conformance (environmental friendliness) of used educational technologies (Grinenko and Makeeva 2018, Kislyakov et al. 2018, Masalimova and Chibakov 2016, Nesterova et al. 2015, Udodov 2011c, Udodov et al. 2018, Zaytsev et al. 2016).

In choosing the eco-psychological approach to modeling support programs for parents of children studying in an inclusive school, we proceeded from the fact that the main objective of inclusive education is to promote the social adaptation of all children, including children with limited abilities. As the developers of the inclusive education model point out, "the main criterion for the inclusive education effectiveness is the success of socialization, introduction to culture, development of the social experience of all children, including children with special educational needs" (Alekhina and Semago 2012). We regard social adaptation as an active process of human interaction with the milieu, during which new constructs emerge. In this case, the emergence of constructs begins under the condition of a mismatch between the requirements of the milieu and the individual's capabilities. Therefore, the facilitation of the adaptation of children in an inclusive school involves the organization of their interaction with the educational environment that is characterized by "tension" and "dynamism" which stimulate the development of social adaptation mechanisms.

From the standpoint of the eco-psychological approach, the developing capabilities of the educational environment are determined by the types of student interaction with the educational environment. The following types of interaction have been identified: object-object, when the interaction is of a formal nature and is characterized by passivity on both sides; object-subject, when the student plays the role of an object of pedagogical influence from teachers; subject-object, when the teacher in the educational environment acts as an object of passive perception and evaluation by the student; subject - subject, when the student and the environment actively interact with each other. In this case, the subject - subject interaction can manifest itself in various forms: the subject-the separate type, in which the active influence of one participant on another is carried out without taking account of the subject position of this other; jointly-subject, when the interaction has a character of joint action; and the subject is the generating one, in which the interaction has a jointly-distributed nature, it requires a mutual

exchange of ways for jointly performed actions, their appropriation and, consequently, a change in one's subjectivity (Panov 2009, Udodov 2010, Volevodz et al. 2018).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of the inclusive education practice and the results of our research show that the majority of parents involved in the educational process organize an "object-subject" type of interaction: they take a "guardian" position to a child - a participant of an inclusive educational milieu (Ganieva et al. 2015, Kuznetsova et al. 2017, Masalimova et al. 2014, Salakhova et al. 2016, 2017, Udodov 2011a, 2011b). They begin to act as a buffer between the demands of the milieu and capabilities of the child, protecting the child from the demands of the milieu, they reduce the level of its tension, shield the child from difficulties, assume the adaptation functions for the student. It is clear that parents choose their behavioral strategy due to the desire to prevent manifestations of maladaptation, but this position of parents reduces the developing possibilities of inclusive education. The psychologist is faced with the task of enriching the parents' possibilities in the use of an alternative strategy focused on the development of adaptive resources, which requires the organization of the subject - generating type of interaction. This task determined the substantive content of the program of activity of a psychologist that we are developing to improve the psychological competence of parents, the choice of forms and methods of work. The content of the program is aimed at stimulating the subject-generating type of interaction in an inclusive educational environment. The subject-generating type of interaction presupposes the formation of the participants' ability to be the subject of the educational environment, to show the hidden and develop interests taken and abilities due to participation in jointly-distributed activities in children and children and adults communities and the formation of a self-analysis position, the ability to "look and analyze oneself from the outside", answering the questions "What am I doing?", "How?", "Why?", "Proceeding from what?" (Panov 2007). The subject-generating interaction between parents and children in an inclusive educational environment presupposes not "guardianship" and protection against difficulties, but support in their awareness and overcoming.

In organizing the subject-generating interaction in the educational environment, the key role is played by "growing the subjective position of the child" (Alekhina and Kutepova 2013). The subject position involves the

development of self-awareness, the ability to independent choice, the development of volitional mechanisms, the focus on activities and efforts to perform chosen actions, the development of skills to design and plan one's own activities. All this is achievable, provided that the child, getting into a situation of difficulty, which he himself evaluates as a hindrance, has the desire to cope with it. The formation in the child's mind of the idea that in order to gain independence it is necessary to learn how to solve your own problems and understand why they occur serves as the mechanism of development.

Building the subject-generating interaction is carried out on the basis of mastering the method of self-analysis, when an adult, interacting with the child, teaches him not to act spontaneously in a situation of a problem, but to think: "why the problem arose; what outcome I want to get as a result of actions to change the situation; what I can do in implementing the desired; what prevents to achieve the desired; how to cope with a hindrance; how my actions will affect other participants in the situation" (Alekhina & Kutepova 2013). To do this, an adult must identify the fact of difficulty, help the child to realize what does not suit him in the situation, to understand what behavior led to it, what the child himself can do to reduce or overcome the difficulty, what he cannot do for himself and where to get help, how to seek it. The key questions to discuss with the child are "what you need to overcome difficulties?", "What I already have and what is missing?" And "where to get it?"

In the course of implementing the program, parents expand the repertoire of the subject-generating interaction, learn how to analyze difficult situations, and how to encourage the desired behavior of children in difficult situations. The work is organized in the form of meetings of the parent club and includes joint classes of parents with children, classes of parent groups. Games, art therapy techniques, viewing and discussion of video materials, training exercises, the analysis of behavior in difficult situations are used. The system of homework for parents is also used, which implies the use of learned skills in the practice of interaction with the child. In subsequent classes, homework is checked, the discussion of successes and difficulties is conducted.

The first 2-3 classes are conducted jointly for children and parents in complete groups, which include students with limited abilities, their parents, healthy schoolchildren, their parents. Classes are concentrated on the child's awareness of difficult situations for him

in the educational environment and his behavior in them; as well as parents' awareness of the situations perceived by the child as difficult, and the child's behavior and feelings in these situations. The leader asks the children to answer the questions:

What situations in school do you consider difficult, that make you tense, which are unpleasant for you? Why are they unpleasant for you?

The situations which children refer to are recorded. The psychologist also calls situations in which he observed difficulties in behavior of children of this group, voicing them in the form of the question "what do you feel in such and such a situation?"

Then parents and children draw the so-called "the suns (diagrams) of behavior". The children in the "sun" center write "I", and the parents - "my child". On each ray, children and parents record ways of behaving in situations that children have mentioned (children write how they behave in these situations, parents remember and write their child's behavior). To complete the task, you can ask the participants to sit in a circle, children and parents with their backs to each other. After completing the task, parent-child pairs compare their suns. The children are asked to answer the following questions:

What did you write?

What usually results from this behavior?

What would you like to achieve with such behavior?

Do you think it is possible to achieve this in another way? How?

Parents answer the following questions:

Did your diagrams coincide with your child's?

Why do you think they are different?

How would you like your child to behave?

What do you think you need to do for this?

As a result of the discussion, children are aware of situations causing difficulties and their behavior in them.

Parents learn more about their children's worries and find out how they can support and help their children overcome difficult situations. From the difficult situations identified by children, the leader selects the most frequently encountered ones (among

healthy children, among children with limited abilities) and organizes that these situations should be acted out by the group members. Parents get involved in the process of supporting children to overcome a difficult situation and offer their support options. The psychologist identifies the most productive types of behavior and methods of support, invites to repeat these methods in the next game situation discussed. By playing difficult situations, children receive group experience in resolving such situations, and parents experience supportive interaction.

Subsequent classes are conducted separately for parents. They discuss the difficulties of education. Here, the following tasks are solved: parents should recognize the difficulties in interacting with the child and their behavior in situations when the child encounters difficulties. First, parents take turns talking about situations when they would like to influence the behavior of their child, describe their behavior in these situations and their result. Then, the leader talks about various options for statements (You messages, I-messages), as well as the reasons that parents tell their children why they should behave this way and not otherwise (reasons that are important to parents; and reasons that are significant for children). Then, parents do practical exercises for training "I-messages" and formulating "causes for children". As a result of classes, parents associate their behavior with the child's behavior. There is a self-analysis of their statements, the expansion of the experience of communicating with the child in order to support him to cope with difficult situations.

The next section is designed to teach parents to use the method of self-analysis in teaching a child to cope with difficult situations. Parents acquire the ways to help children in the awareness of their behavior and development. The leader talks about matter-of-fact (tracing) statements. The lecture material is supported by the demonstration of video materials of the educational program for parents "Upbringing based on common sense" (Berk and Herron 2001). Further, parents practice in the formulation of assertive descriptions (statements), allowing them to pinpoint the difficulty, state the child's behavior, ask about its effectiveness, suggest a self-analysis of the situation: what I want, what I need, what I can, what I cannot do myself where to get the resources. As a result, parents get the experience of a non-judgmental description of a child's actions in order to help them become aware of their behavior. The last section is intended for parents

to acquire the ways to reinforce the constructive behavior of children and summarize the experience gained during all classes. The leader informs about inspiring statements in the continuation of the matter-of-fact (assertive) descriptions. Then, parents do a practical task for training inspiring statements in relation to each other. To exchange the statements a ball is used. While getting a statement together with the ball, the participant gives feedback on how much it inspires him and whether he wants to continue to behave as well. As a result, parents get practical experience in reinforcing constructive behavior of their children.

The generalization of the experience gained as a result of training takes place when performing the exercise "Decision Tree". A tree trunk is prepared in advance on a drawing paper sheet; the leaves of three colors (for example, black, brown, green) are given out to participants. On black leaves, each one writes down difficulties while interacting with children, which he considers common to all, and sticks to the roots of the tree. On a brown leaf- the ways to resolve these difficulties and sticks them to the tree trunk. The desired results are recorded on green ones - this is how tree foliage is formed.

CONCLUSIONS

The testing of the program allowed us to register several positive effects at once: a decrease in resistance of parents of healthy children to inclusive education ideas; a decline in the number of requests from parents of children with limited abilities to provide their child with the individual education plan and an increase in their desire to actively participate in school affairs; an increase in the number of parents' choices of constructive strategies to interact with the child; a significant increase in constructive strategies to cope with difficult situations in children. We consider the rise of indicators of parents' satisfaction with the educational environment of an inclusive school, the level of its psychological safety, and increased constructiveness in interaction with teachers to be no less significant effect of the program implementation.

Designing parent education and support programs for a psychologist based on the eco-psychological approach helps to solve the tasks of overcoming the parents' desire to shield their children from the difficulties of interacting with the inclusive educational environment, moving from a care strategy to a support strategy to overcome difficulties, which contributes to the development of adaptation resources.

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