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FUTURE TEACHERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING: COPING-STRATEGIES

The paper deals with the issue of psychological readiness of future teachers to work under conditions of inclusive education. The indicators of behavioral adaptability, stress reactions and decisiveness in overcoming difficulties in inclusive educational activities, indicating the coping-strategic aspect of psychological readiness, are determined. They were the basis for the development of diagnostic materials (inventories and questionnaires), whose application in the course of an experiment made it possible to obtain appropriate empirical data for a clear quantitative and qualitative differentiation of students in terms of (perfect, satisfactory, unsatisfactory) psychological readiness for inclusive educational activities. The research outcomes show the urgent need to find effective ways of disclosing coping-strategic reserves of future teachers, which in properly established conditions of higher education open up a broad perspective to increase the level of psychological readiness for inclusive teaching.

Keywords: coping strategy, state of readiness, psychological readiness, future teacher, inclusive and educational activity, psychological and pedagogical diagnostics.

Introduction

The work of a teacher in the context of inclusive education is one of the most stressful types of social activity in the psychological plane, as a result of which it is expedient to subsume it into the category of stressful occupations. The main factors are daily emotional stresses, complex pedagogical situations, role uncertainty, frequent and intensive communicative contacts, interaction with heterogeneous social groups [4, p. 155]. It, as L. Mitin emphasizes, harms a teacher's health, leads to a sense of helplessness and absurdity of existence, low professional self-esteem and problems in the field of communication [7, p. 49].

Many psychological works highlight coping behavior strategies. This theory has gained a great deal of recognition. But the most common one is the concept of American psychologist R. Lazarus, according to which "coping" is a means of protection from psycho-traumatic events for influencing the situational behavior of a person under specific conditions [11].

In the context of the pedagogical science, the coping-strategic aspect of professional activity becomes more and more debatable. This is evidenced by a number of publications by various authors (T. Dzyuba [9], A. Baranov [2], H. Kukhterina [5], V. Miniarov [6], V. Pichurin [12], A. Pohribna [8] and etc.). However, today there are only a few studies concerning the features of coping strategies of teachers in terms of inclusive education in Ukraine.

According to the classification of L. Lazarus, positive coping strategies are self-control, responsibility, search for social support, planning, reassessment of the situation, and negative ones are confrontation, distance, leakage [10, p. 246-247]. Scientists also distinguish between the following groups of coping resources: external (money, social support, time, living standards, education, absence of stress) and internal (personality traits that help to overcome stress in the form of autonomy, optimism and self-control) [1, p. 25-27]. All this is directly related to the teacher, whose work under conditions of inclusive education in psychological terms is characterized by acts of mental, psychoemotional and physical stress leading to maladaptation, the inability to find the best way out of difficult conflict situations in relationships with colleagues, students of the inclusive classes, and their parents.

In order to overcome these negative aspects, a future teacher must learn to develop such coping strategies that strengthen his/her psychological protection, weaken the tension, enable an adequate response to stressful events, and purposeful and successful crisis management. That is why the study of the coping-strategic aspect of the psychological readiness of a future teacher for inclusive teaching is of extreme importance.

Aim and Tasks

The paper aims to reveal the results of the assessment of future teachers' psychological readiness for in-

clusive teaching according to the parameters of the coping-strategic criterion.

The following tasks are set:

1) to determine the indicators of psychological readiness of future teachers for inclusive teaching according to the coping-strategic criterion,

2) to develop appropriate methodical tools for conducting and achieving the results of diagnosis regarding the differentiation of its status in pedagogical university graduates.

Research Methods

The research is based on a methodology of I. Demchenko [3] who studied elementary school teachers' readiness to work in the field of inclusive education and designed the corresponding technique of assessments.

The introduction of an inclusive component into the system of general education raised the requirements for internal resources of the teacher's personality – adaptability, stress resistance and decisiveness in overcoming psychological barriers and difficulties in work. For successful performance of professional duties, a teacher must be able to adapt to the complex conditions of the inclusive environment, to establish harmonious relationships with participants in the inclusive educational process, respond adequately to stress situations, anticipate probable failures in teaching children with special educational needs, choose reasonable ways to solve existing problems and contradictions, etc.

The above-mentioned positions are important determinants of the psychological readiness of a future teacher for inclusive educational activity, which is affected by the coping-strategic criterion with such indicators as adaptive behavior in the conditions of inclusive education, the reactions to stressful situations, and the decisiveness in overcoming difficulties. These parameters are the basis for the development of methodological tools for assessing the state of psychological readiness for inclusive teaching.

The research involved 380 graduate students of full-time and part-time forms of studying from the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Preschool and Special Education and the Faculty of Primary Education of Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University. Two homogeneous and identical groups were distinguished – experimental and control ones.

According to the indicator of adaptability, we designed a questionnaire containing 15 statements which provided the respondents' agreement, disagreement or partial agreement. For example: "In my future work in an inclusive school, I will try to solve my life problems in relation to the specifics of my occupation: a) yes; b) difficult to say; c) no. For all items in the questionnaire, the "a" variant is estimated as 2 points; "b" answer – 1 point; and "c" – 0 points. If a student gets from 0 to 10 points, then the likely adaptability of his/her behavior in future inclusive environment is potentially low; from 11 to 20 – average; from 21 to 30 – high.

In order to evaluate the degree, the students' reactions to typical stress situations in future inclusive work, we designed special tests, which consisted of three blocks of questions related to reactions to stress, distress and eustress. The first of them covered pedagogical situations (children making noise in the classroom, the mockery of students with children with disorders, students with aggressive attacks, etc.), which make a teacher lose patience. The second one is possible tragic facts or states of pupils' lives (loss of consciousness, drowsiness, soreness, etc.), which may cause the teacher to fall into despair; the third one involves such a behavior of students (excessive complementarity, courtesy, boastfulness, etc.), which provokes a certain emotional reaction in a teacher. The students were asked to rate the degree of their reactions according to the points: strong reaction – 3; not too strong – 2; no reaction – 1. Then, every student should calculate the number of points obtained and divide them into the maximum possible number of points (90). For example, $84:90 = 0.93$. If a student feels that his / her self-esteem is somewhat overestimated, then it is expedient to reduce the amount of points by 6 points and, on the contrary, if it is understated, they should add 6 points. For example: $84 - 6 = 78: 90 = 0.86$; $84 + 6 = 90: 90 = 1.0$. In such a way a corresponding coefficient was calculated: if it is from 0.33 to 0.55, then the reactivity to typical stress situations in the inclusive educational activity is weak; from 0.56 to 0.77 – normal; from 0.78 to 1.0 – excessive [3, p. 123-124].

To find out which of the varieties of coping strategies will be used by future teachers in real-life problem situations occurring in inclusive education, they were offered a self-esteem determination test. They had to imagine that they faced a real problem in their work, for example, they were told that in their inclusive class, the facts of segregation were revealed. They had to decide how they would cope with the problem, for example: I will share it with my colleague and ask for help; I will try to solve it in an optimal way; I will try to ignore it, etc. The students were given a table with a list of 21 variants of decisions, which should be assessed with the scores: yes - 3; apparently yes - 2; no - 1. The processing of the test results was carried out in a form of filling of a special table by the respondents, in which: an accepting responsibility strategy column is marked by 2, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16 variants of decisions; seeking social support – 1, 6, 9, 11, 13, 18, 19; avoidance - 3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 20, 21. Each of these numbers should be marked with points of their self-esteem. Interpretation: the minimum sum of the points got for each unit related to one or another basic variety of the coping strategy is 7; and the maximum one is 21.

Research Results

Empirical data obtained as a result of assessing the state of psychological readiness of future teachers to engage in inclusive education according to the coping-strategic criterion are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

**Psychological Readiness of Students for Inclusive Teaching
According to the Indicators of Coping-Strategic Criterion (%)**

Indicators	State					
	unsatisfactory		satisfactory		perfect	
	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG
Behavior adaptivity in inclusive teaching process	21.3	25.1	39.9	34.7	38.8	40.2
Reactivity to stressful situations in inclusive teaching process	17.7	13.8	52.5	57.0	29.8	29.2
Decisiveness in overcoming difficulties in inclusive teaching process	9.4	11.6	55.7	49.9	34.9	38.5
Mean value	16.1	16.8	49.4	47.2	34.5	36.0

Table 1 shows that according to the first assessment procedure, the potentially low adaptive behavior in the future inclusive activity is characteristic of more than 21% of students; the average one – for almost 40%; high – about 39%. According to the results of further testing, it has been found that almost 18% of the students have weak reactivity to typical stress situations in inclusive education activities; over 52% - excessive; about 30% - normal. The results of the self-esteem determination test have shown that the strategy of avoiding problem situations that occur in professional activities in the context of inclusive education is characteristic of over 9% of the respondents; seeking social support – for almost 66%; and accepting responsibility – for about 35%.

The aggregated data illustrate that most of the EG respondents (over 49%) and CG students (more than 47%) have a satisfactory state of coping-strategic psychological readiness for inclusive teaching. At the same time, the best result is observed in students' reactivity to stressful situations and decisiveness in overcoming difficulties. Somewhat more problematic is their behavioral adaptability, which requires improvement.

Conclusions

The indicators of coping-strategic criterion of psychological readiness of future teachers for inclusive teaching are as follows: adaptive behavior, reactivity to stressful situations and decisiveness in overcoming difficulties. According to the above parameters, a number of diagnostic tools were applied for the assessment of graduate students' psychological readiness for inclusive teaching. These techniques can be used by teachers of disciplines of the psycho-pedagogical cycle and internship managers to

collect empirical data on the coping-strategic peculiarities of pedagogical university students.

According to the indicators of coping-strategic criterion, the future teachers with the perfect state of psychological readiness for inclusive education can potentially show high adaptability of behavior, normal reactivity to stressful situations, decisiveness in overcoming difficulties. The students with the satisfactory state can potentially show mediocre adaptive behavior, excessive reactivity in stressful situations, and a coping strategy for seeking social support in overcoming difficulties. The unsatisfactory state is characteristic of the students who can potentially manifest low adaptive behavior, poor reactivity to stressful situations, and avoiding difficulties.

The perfect state of psychological readiness for inclusive teaching is inherent in only one-third of the total number of students involved in the experiment; the satisfactory one – for almost a half of them; and the unsatisfactory one – for about within 16%. This confirms the inadequate effectiveness of training teachers who are going to work at inclusive school in the context of the formation of their personality and professional qualities. Hence, there is an urgent need to disclose the coping-strategic reserves of students through their involvement in quasi-professional inclusive education and active reflection of their experience.

The prospect of further research involves substantiating and implementing pedagogical conditions for increasing the level of psychological readiness of future teachers for inclusive teaching on the basis of simulation modeling of real and imaginary problem situations that occur in inclusive work and their successful solution in the context of the application of adequate coping strategies.

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СТАН ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОЇ ГОТОВНОСТІ МАЙБУТНІХ ПЕДАГОГІВ ДО ІНКЛЮЗИВНО-ОСВІТНЬОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ: КОПІНГ-СТРАТЕГІЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

У статті розглядається проблема дослідження стану психологічної готовності майбутніх педагогів до роботи в умовах інклюзивної освіти. Визначено показники копінг-стратегічного критерію психологічної готовності майбутніх педагогів до роботи в умовах інклюзивної освіти: адаптивність поведінки, реактивність на стресові ситуації та рішучість у подоланні труднощів в інклюзивно-освітній діяльності. Згідно з окресленими параметрами, було застосовано низку діагностичних матеріалів (тести, анкети, опитувальники), завдяки використанню яких з'ясовано стан її сформованості (ідеальний, задовільний, незадовільний) у студентів-випускників освітнього ступеня «бакалавр». З'ясовано, що, відповідно до показників копінг-стратегічного критерію, майбутні педагоги з ідеальним станом психологічної готовності до інклюзивно-освітньої діяльності потенційно можуть виявляти високу адаптивність поведінки, нормальну реактивність на стресові ситуації, рішучість у подоланні труднощів. Студенти із задовільним станом потенційно можуть виявляти посередню адаптивність поведінки, надмірну реактивність на стресові ситуації, копінг-стратегію пошуку зовнішньої підтримки в подоланні труднощів. Незадовільний стан властивий студентам, які потенційно можуть виявляти низьку адаптивність поведінки, слабку реактивність на стресові ситуації, копінг-стратегію уникнення у подоланні труднощів. У дослідженні взяли участь 308 студентів. Установлено, що ідеальний стан психологічної готовності до інклюзивно-освітньої діяльності за показниками копінг-стратегічного виміру властивий лише третині з усієї кількості залучених до експерименту студентів; задовільний – майже половині; незадовільний – у межах 16%. Такий фактаж підтверджує недостатню результативність освітнього процесу підготовки педагогів інклюзивної школи в контексті формування особистісно-професійних якостей. Звідси виникає нагальна потреба максимально розкривати копінг-стратегічні резерви студентів шляхом їх залучення до квазіпрофесійної інклюзивно-освітньої діяльності та активної рефлексії її досвіду. Перспектива подальшого дослідження полягає в обґрунтуванні й реалізації педагогічних умов підвищення рівня психологічної готовності майбутніх педагогів до інклюзивно-освітньої діяльності на засадах імітаційного моделювання реальних та уявних проблемних ситуацій, що трапляються в інклюзивно-педагогічній роботі, та їх успішного розв'язання в контексті застосування адекватних копінг-стратегій.

Ключові слова: копінг-стратегія, стан готовності, психологічна готовність, майбутній педагог, інклюзивно-освітня діяльність, психолого-педагогічна діагностика.

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