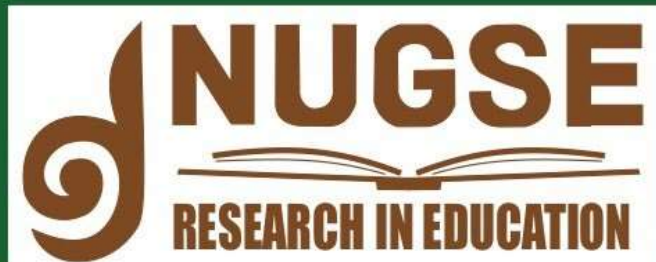


Special Issue
Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan
Volume 3|Issue 2|December 2018



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of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan:
The View of Three
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Leadership for Change: Promoting Inclusive
Values and Cultures
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of Students With and Without
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One Size Does Not Fit All: A Case of a
Student Who Encountered
a Problem in an Exam
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A Case Study: What Is Better
For His Future?
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This issue's cover image represents the featured article, which highlights inclusion, prosperity and unity.

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Special Issue: Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

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Inclusive Education in Post-Soviet Countries: a Case of Kazakhstan

Dr. Tsediso Michael Makoelle

General Director of Research, Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

Inclusive education has become a focal point internationally (Ainscow, Dyson & Weiner, 2013). In many contexts the implementation of inclusive education is characterized by contradictions, controversies, dilemmas and anomalies (Makoelle, 2014a; Slee, 2018). The fact that inclusive education came as a critique of special education raises a lot of questions as some tend to attribute it solely to education of students with disability and special needs, while in essence it focuses on a wide spectrum of diversity such as gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Makoelle, 2016). The emphasis on disability and special needs create a framework of thinking imbued with an extreme inclination to believe that inclusion is only about disability. The fact that there are different ways in which the notion of inclusion is conceptualized means it is enacted through different practices and policy perspectives. Whoever goes through the process of enacting inclusion, experiences it differently depending on unique situation and context (Makoelle, 2014b).

Therefore, it is important that the notion of inclusive education be re-imagined out of the bounds of past special needs practices, which assume that barriers to effective learning stems from the students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This view about inclusion as disability and special need focused is dominant within the post-soviet countries. The emergence of special education in the USSR was characterized by segregation. It was believed that students who showed signs or barriers to learning were unhealthy, and were then diagnosed with a specific defect, and put forward for rehabilitation through a practice called “defectology” (Csapo, 1984). The understanding of inclusive education in post-soviet countries is still influenced to a great extent by this notion of defectology.

Kazakhstan is arguably leading as far as the implementation of inclusive education is concerned. The adoption of the right to education and through its State Program (2011), Kazakhstan has made the implementation of inclusive education one of the priorities of the education reforms initiated since its independence in 1991. However, like other countries, the implementation of inclusive education in Kazakhstan has not been immune to challenges (Denivarova & Abdresheva, 2015). The fact that the understanding of inclusive education has not been properly conceptualized still leaves the hallmarks of misinterpretations concerning what inclusion really means (Makoelle & Somerton, 2018). The establishment of inclusive education schools is a bold step in the right direction, however more thought needs to be invested into what inclusion really means given the international experience. More work needs to be devoted on a total overhaul of the teacher education industry in order to prepare both pre-service and in-service teachers for inclusive teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, the re-imagining of teacher education curriculum, and the training of teacher educators must take centre stage. The curriculum reforms embarked upon needs to put inclusive education at the centre of any pedagogical transformation. Assessment and school leadership dimensions have not thoughtfully considered the fact that through the creation of inclusive schools there is likely to be assorted student needs that require an assessment system that is geared to respond to these unique needs (Watkins, 2007).

In conclusion, while Kazakhstan has made a tremendous progress in making the bold pronouncement about inclusive education, it is just at the beginning of a long journey towards the realization of inclusive classrooms. Through a systematic and well-planned reform, Kazakhstan can contribute immensely towards sharing the experience of implementing inclusive education within a post-soviet education context, and thus become a hub for inclusive education in Central Asia. The articles in this special issue illustrate some of the challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in Kazakhstan.

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A Qualitative Study of Parental Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan: The View of Three

Zarina Khamidulina

Kazakhstan is presently undergoing a number of developments in the education system. One of the main reform directions includes the development of inclusive education. The problem is that the reform lacks a focus on increasing social awareness about inclusive education (Zholtayeva et al., 2013). This qualitative-interview based study aims at exploring parental perceptions about the inclusion of children with special needs at the mainstream schools. The results of this study make important revelations about the parental understandings of the policy, their attitudes and possible challenges schools face when implementing the inclusive education practices.

Keywords: inclusive education, parental view on inclusive education, education for special needs.

Introduction

Kazakhstan is currently implementing a number of initiatives and reforms in the education system with a purpose of developing inclusive practices. In the State Program of Education Development of Kazakhstan (2011-2020), the government provides a number of goals directed toward improving the inclusive education policies in the country (MoES, 2011). This national document sets the direction, as well as clarifies the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in implementing education policies at all levels. Inclusive education suggests equal access to the quality education at all levels; and consequently, stipulates the provision of access to education by all children irrespective of their socio-economic background, geography, language and ethnicity group, gender, race, age and nationality. Currently, achievement of social equality through increasing the equal access to quality education for children with disabilities and with special educational needs remains as one of the major social as well as educational issues in Kazakhstan (OECD, 2014). The problem is that the policy lacks a focus on increasing social awareness of the society about inclusive education (Zholtayeva, Stambekova, Alipbayeva & Yerzhanova, 2013); and particularly, few is known about addressing the inclusion from the context of parental perspectives and attitudes. Understanding and studying the perspectives of parents about the implementation of inclusion is important since successful development of inclusive education depends on a number of factors, including the parental awareness about the policy (Zholtayeva et al., 2013). Parents are the ones, who are responsible for their children's education and development, and they decide where for their children to study; and in this way, they play a role in assessing the effectiveness of different school programs. Parents can also work in collaboration with schools; and support the development of inclusive education policies and practices. Worth noting is that the parental support of inclusive policies may depend on their perspectives, and general awareness about inclusive practices (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). All this helps to understand that it is essential to examine the parental perceptions about inclusive education in Kazakhstan, and apply this knowledge in further enhancing the effectiveness of the policy implementation. The main purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of parents about inclusive education in Kazakhstan. The study focuses on the following research questions: 1) what are parents' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education? and 2) what are the possible challenges parents think schools face, while integrating inclusive education practices?

Literature Review

The review of the literature indicates that perceptions of parents about inclusive education vary; while some view integration of children with special needs to the mainstream schools as a positive policy initiative, others feel that their children would receive less attention during the lessons if children with disabilities are integrated (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). For instance, Reichart, Lynch, Anderson, Svobodny, Di Cola and Mercury (1989) studied perceptions of parents of children without disabilities, and conducted a number of interviews with twelve parents. The findings suggest that respondents viewed the contact among children with and without disabilities as the one promoting positive social relationships especially when the setting was integrated, parents found that integration increased the understanding of children about each other's diversity better (Reichart et al., 1989). Similarly to Reichart et al., (1989) the findings of Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003) indicated positive respondents' attitudes towards the inclusion of children; specifically, the inclusion of pupils with Down syndrome to the mainstream schools. They investigated the attitudes of 2053 people and 538 teachers about the educational inclusion of children with the Down syndrome, and both groups demonstrated quite good knowledge and positive attitudes

towards inclusion. However, despite the recognition of the positive aspects of inclusion, only 20% of respondents believed that the regular classroom was the best option for children with indicated syndrome. Importantly, researchers highlighted the importance of increasing the parental awareness about accepting the diversity at schools. Specifically, Duhaney and Salend (2000) in their study on parental perceptions of inclusive education specified several benefits that parents may find in inclusive environments. These benefits included “social cognition, such as greater awareness of other children’s needs, pro-social personal characteristics (for example, more responsiveness and helpfulness to the needs of classmates with disabilities), and greater acceptance of human diversity (like more likelihood of feeling comfortable with classmates and others with disabilities, and less likelihood of holding prejudices and stereotypes about people who look or behave differently)” (Duhaney & Salend, 2000, p. 123).

In contrast to this, the study conducted by Duhaney and Salend (2000) indicated that one-fourth of participants felt that their children received fewer attention during the lessons if children with disabilities were integrated to the mainstream school classrooms. Green and Stoneman (1989) conducted a research about the attitudes of almost two hundred parents regarding integrated programs, and found that generally parental attitudes towards integration become more positive as they find the social interaction of children to be a good life experience. Green and Stoneman (1989) argue that parental perceptions change according to the type of special educational need that might be required. It is noticeable from the literature that parents support the integration of children with physical and sensory disabilities. At the same time, researchers pose concerns about integrating children with severe disabilities, mental retardation, behavior disorders, and with any kind of emotional disturbances. Green and Stoneman (1989) suggest that as a response, professional training of teachers may play an extremely important factor in overcoming this challenge, and enhancing a successful integration of children with disabilities. Overall, the analysis of the literature indicates that perceptions of parents about inclusive education differ; while some perceive the integration of children with special needs to the mainstream schools as a positive policy initiative, others think that their children would get less attention during the lessons if children with disabilities are integrated. Although the general perception of parents of children without disabilities towards inclusive education is positive, some parents have certain concerns. To be more precise, parents of children without disabilities are concerned about the following aspects that need to be taken into account: the effectiveness of the time devoted to each child in the classroom; the effectiveness of the teachers’ instructional practices; the role of the teacher in the inclusive classrooms; the qualification of educators; safety and transportation measures; sufficiency of an appropriate specialist support, including other required resources for integration (Grove & Fisher, 1999; Duhaney & Salend, 2000).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method. A qualitative approach helps to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Creswell, 2007); and thereof, this approach best suited to addressing the research questions, and gaining an insight into parental perspectives regarding inclusive education. Specifically, a qualitative methodology allowed the acquisition of deeper information related to the attitudes, reactions, experiences and perceptions of parents regarding inclusive education (Creswell, 2012). Purposeful snowball sampling was used to recruit parents in the study. Snowball sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that after recruiting one participant allows simplifying the sampling procedure as that participant can recommend other individuals (Creswell, 2012). In this case, the first participant was selected purposefully; the participant had a child without disability in a mainstream school. It was expected that indicated sampling strategy would provide the researcher with an opportunity to recruit parents from different settings, diverse backgrounds, and those who had children with different age groups. The first respondent recommended other individuals with whom he had regular contacts. The nature of the relationship between participants allowed the researcher to stay confident about the willingness of the parents to participate while not dropping out from the study. Finally, three parents were selected, after having signed an informed consent form, which included information about the research, ethical issues and possible benefits: one mother and two father parents agreed to participate in this research.

To collect data, three semi-structured face-to-face interviews were held, each lasting roughly 25 minutes in the respondents’ homes. The semi-structured type of interviews best suited the purpose of this study since they allowed better control of the type of the information received by the researcher, and provided the possibility to lead the conversation, and change questions when this became necessary (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, one-on-one interviews helped the researcher to collect information, and conduct an in-depth analysis of the data. This data collection instrument permitted gathering of detailed information without any outside interruptions. A list of structured questions developed by the researcher prior to the interviews was used; a couple of minor changes took place during the interviews, such as the paraphrasing of the questions and making necessary clarifications. Each

interview was tape recorded and transcribed. To analyze the data, parents' interview answers were grouped and developed into different coding categories (Creswell, 2012). Afterwards, the emerged coding categories were convened under three main themes in compliance with the sub-questions in order to answer the main research questions.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study were organized into three themes in accordance with the following research questions: a) what are parents' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education; and b) what are the possible challenges parents think schools currently face, when integrating inclusive education practices. Specifically, during the data analysis the following main themes have emerged with relation to the perception of parents about inclusive education: the parental understanding of the inclusive education, the attitudes of parents, and parental views about possible challenges of implementing inclusive practices at mainstream schools.

Parents' Perceptions of Inclusive Education and Their Attitudes

The results of the study show that two out of three parents are quite aware of inclusive education. Parents understand that inclusive education means the acceptance of children differences in the mainstream schools, including those with disabilities. This is expressed in the following comment:

I think that the idea of inclusive education is that such children [children with disabilities] should be taught in mainstream schools, with ordinary children naturally and thus they will adapt to regular education from an early stage. [Parent 1]

This indicates that parents understand that the early inclusion of children with special educational needs will help their children to adapt better to society. Additionally, Parent 2 thinks that turning our attention to the problems of those in need is one of the best indicators of country's development. However, they feel that society might not be ready to accept all differences among human beings. For example, Parent 3 stated: "Even our society is not ready to accept such children. They begin to look at them [children with disabilities] as something strange, finger pointing, giving loud comments..."

Parents' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

Parents generally report positive attitudes regarding inclusive educational initiatives in the country. The responses of parents to the questions related to the benefits of inclusion shows that they see inclusion as being as equally beneficial for children with special educational needs as to those without. They think that inclusion will increase opportunities to develop social competences, and expand the possibility of the acceptance of such individuals in the real world as equal members of society. Additionally, children without disabilities will learn to be tolerant to differences, and to be kind and friendly. For example, Parent 1 stated:

Well, the advantage appears in the period of social adjustment because I think, early adaption to real life will be easier for them [children with SEN] to adapt to their abilities, I think, because they really will catch up, look at their peers, and accordingly they will be likely to want to change something in their lives. If we are talking about children with certain disabilities, so they will be motivated to develop in all means...

In addition to positive social contacts, parents also point out some economic benefits of the inclusion of all children to the mainstream schools. Specifically, parents suggest that the policy will help to unload special schools. However, despite overall positive attitudes, parents expressed their doubts about including all children to the mainstream school setting, and these challenges are discussed below.

Parents' View About Challenges

Despite understanding the importance of inclusive programs in combating discriminatory practices in the educational system, parents still feel that schools are not ready yet to accommodate children with special educational needs. All three parents think that schools are not fully equipped, and lack relevant facilities for children with any form of physical disability. Parents believe that poor infrastructure, large class sizes and the absence of support services may become the main obstacle in achieving meaningful results. For instance, the first interviewee stated the following:

...Neither classrooms nor entryways are ready. They are very narrow. Well, because I have a child enrolled in a mainstream school, I see that schools are not ready to meet those [children with disabilities] children's

needs... There is no special access at schools to accept these children. For instance, to welcome children on wheelchairs... [Parent1]

Parents view lack of qualified teacher assistance and lack of effective education programs as another major drawback to implementing inclusion practices within the mainstream school settings. Parents think that children with disabilities are in need of special support, which is currently inadequately provided. Specifically, children with special educational needs, require involvement of professionals, who will assist with their adaptation, medical treatment and other additional services. Although parents are aware of current medical and psychological support provided at schools, they are not sure if it might meet the needs of all children in facilitating and providing an adequate level of education.

Additionally, parents believe that media could serve as useful tool in promoting communities that would welcome differences and education for all. Parents think that government should not underestimate the importance of media in promoting, and explaining the importance of inclusive education to the society, and increasing its general awareness about the policy. The findings suggest that parents understand that inclusive education is becoming one of the guiding educational policies in the country. They support the initiatives of the government, but they are also critical of the implementation process. This partially aligns with the data in the literature; for example, the findings about the inclusive practices in developed countries have shown that parents generally have positive attitudes towards inclusion, while at the same time being concerned about the quality of instruction, availability of sufficient support and facilities (Green & Stoneman, 1989; Laurel & Spencer, 2000; Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Jelas, 2000; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). Literature results also revealed that parents have positive perceptions regarding the inclusion of children with physical or mild disabilities rather than those with behavioral or severe disabilities (Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Leyser and Kirk (2004) literature analysis suggests that in the worldwide practices there is a tendency for elementary-aged children with disabilities in schools rather than at the secondary level of schools. It is reported that many parents of children with disabilities are questioning the benefits of attending secondary schools as the academic pressure rises significantly.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that parents are positive about inclusive education in Kazakhstan. Parents support the idea of welcoming students with special needs in the mainstream schools, and also aware about social, emotional and economic benefits that inclusive education can potentially bring. However, as possible challenges, they understand that the society still doesn't have full understanding of the benefits of inclusive education. Parents question the readiness of schools, such as availability of facilities, infrastructure and teachers. Parents are the agents of change as the same as teachers and students are. As one of the main stakeholders, parents are the ones, who decide the place where for their children to study; they also contribute to the implementation of any education related initiatives of the government. When there are overall positive society perceptions, the chances for successful implementation of inclusive education increase, whilst negative perceptions may serve as a barrier for successful execution of the inclusive education policy practices in the country.

Study Limitations

The significant limitation of this study is a small sample of participants. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Furthermore, this study based on a single data collection instrument; therefore for further development in this field, it is suggested to gather perceptions from larger population, for example, from the parents of children with special needs, while using different data collection instruments. Finally, studying the perception of other stakeholders could help add additional value to research, and contribute to a more holistic understanding of the issue under the investigation.

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Leadership for Change: Promoting Inclusive Values and Cultures

Yevgeniya Passeka

Cultural values are the foundation of inclusion, and this is the reason why Ainscow and Booth (2002) in their Index for Inclusion put this dimension at the base of their inverted triangle with the other two sides being policies and practices. The authors of the index argue that developing inclusive cultures can bring about a change in procedures (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This is why it is critical that all the policy participants are made aware of the cultural values and ideas before trying to implement the inclusion policies. This study focuses on the cultural aspects of implementing inclusive education at schools, and attempts to answer who should take the leadership role in order to undertake positive practical steps in promoting inclusive values and cultures in the mainstream schools in Kazakhstan; and discusses which leadership models would best suit in the context of inclusive schools.

Keywords: inclusion, mainstream schools, culture, purpose, models of leadership.

It is not only the government and educators who are involved in the inclusive education reforms; all members of the society play a role in forming attitudes towards inclusive education, and can influence the outcomes of any government initiative. This is why it is crucial that all participants are aware of the cultural values and ideas before trying to perform inclusive education practices. If the goal is to build supportive communities for all, the traditional top-down managerial approach of passing down legislation and legal framework by itself, is not going to be effective unless everyone has a clear understanding of the purpose behind the concept of inclusion (Bush, 2011). What are the most crucial implications of moving towards inclusive education for school leaders and different stakeholders in Kazakhstan? This work aims at attempting to answer who should take the leadership role in order to undertake positive practical steps in promoting inclusive values and cultures in the context of Kazakhstani mainstream schools and communities. The paper focuses on the cultural aspects of implementing inclusion as one of the most important dimensions described by Booth and Ainscow (2002) in their Index for Inclusion.

Cultural values are the basis of inclusion, and this is the reason why Ainscow and Booth (2002) in their Index for Inclusion put this dimension at the core of their inverted triangle with the other two sides being policies and practices. Specifically, the authors of the this index argue that developing inclusive cultures can bring about a change in the procedures and approaches, as well as help to sustain this progression through the constant encouragement of those values by staff and pupils (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Consequently, this helps to understand that in order to change the cultural attitudes of the communities, firstly, it is important being aware of the challenges of the environment in schools. Historically, Kazakhstan has inherited a post-Soviet educational system, which had a long tradition of excluding people with disabilities by separating them into special correctional schools (Bridges, 2014). Not only did it separate children from their peers, but it separated specialist teachers trained in working with children with special needs from their colleagues in the mainstream schools resulting in no sharing of the professional experience (Bridges, 2014). Contemporary thinking and attitudes in society towards differences and disabilities stem from that segregation practice. People are often wary or afraid of things they do not understand, or are unfamiliar with. Therefore, it is important to focus on raising people's awareness of inclusive education as being a crucial part of a truly democratic society, where human rights and social justice for all are valued (Capper & Young, 2014).

Furthermore, another challenge of the current system is the top-down approach to reforms in Kazakhstan, and the fact that the educational system is highly centralized (Bardach, 2012; Bridges, 2014). The government communicates information about reforms through the educational programmes and a set of different official documents to the regional departments that instruct city departments, which, in their turn, instruct schools. There is a lot of accountability, but there is a few initiative from the bottom-up. If there is a lack of understanding of the social and economic benefits of inclusions at the lower levels, then a directive from the top is more likely to be met with resistance. For instance, according to Bridges (2014), the Sandzh Centre survey revealed that two-thirds of interviewed teachers, civil servants and school administrators opposed the idea of inclusive education; which indicates a lack of capacity of the lower level of the system to understanding the social and economic benefits of inclusive practices. This helps to understand that for the successful implementation of the inclusive educational reform, much effort must be made towards changing the mindsets; and that increasing schools' capacities to accommodating pupils with various additional needs is insufficient alone. Another aspect worth noting is that the work of school administration in Kazakhstani schools is assessed based on pupils' achievement indicators in a national test; regional and nationwide teachers' and pupils' participation in the academic competitions; teachers'

and school senior leadership team's participation in the conferences; school facilities management; and publication in different educational journals (Bridges, 2014). Hence, it appears that actions like creating friendly and open; collaborative and inclusive communities are not usually criteria for evaluating the school administration's performance. The assumption is that if one of the school assessment items (Bridges, 2014) includes the provision of the evidence for creating inclusive cultures, and inclusive school communities; school directors and school leadership teams would be more motivated to work in promoting appropriate inclusive policies and practices.

What leadership models would best suit in the context of inclusive schools in Kazakhstan? This is one of the most important questions worth thinking when moving towards inclusive education by the school leaders and different stakeholders in the country. There are several models of leadership: the formal, collegial and the cultural. The formal model of leadership is not the most effective one when implementing the inclusive education policies and practices. This is, firstly, because at the heart of the concept of inclusivity is the system of inner values. Does the society appreciate diversity and individuality; does it celebrate rather than segregate differences? The school educational system focused on the command and control, and valued "conformity over entrepreneurship and independence" (Bridges, 2014, p. 325). This kind of belief cannot simply disappear by passing governmental legislation. It takes time, the collaborative effort of people with the right vision to demonstrate good practices, thus promoting inclusive values by their own example to encourage others to do the same. In this respect, this helps to understand that a collegial model of leadership (Bush, 2011) would better suit in developing inclusive education in Kazakhstan. School administration, teachers and parents can work together to raise the awareness, helping to understand the importance of a holistic approach to a pupil's learning and, thus dispel misconceptions. The collegial model implies that all staff takes an active part in making decisions. The drawback can be that lack of control and direction can lead to some chaos in the organization and that some decisions might not be implemented properly (Sykes, 2015). In order to avoid this, some form of clear communication procedures and guidelines need to be put into the place. Another model of leadership that can go along together with the collegial model is the cultural one (Bush, 2011). In the cultural model, the emphasis is put on understanding the informal rituals and values of school members; and on influencing them to bring about the necessary change. As Sykes (2015) argues if staff does not see themselves as a part of the innovation, they are bound to see any change as an inconvenience rather than an improvement. It is, therefore, important that school-based stakeholders feel that their opinions matter and their voices are heard. It is only when people involved in the education process share similar values that they can positively affect changes, and take some practical steps to implement these changes together.

Any educational system is a reflection of the society which it belongs to. The children attending school today are the adults shaping the country's tomorrow. This is why the change of the mindset should first start within the school. There is a lot that one can say about local comprehensive schools not being ready for inclusion due to the lack of trained teachers, absence of resources, special tutors and necessary facilities. For example, access to school is problematic for some because of the lack of ramps and elevators. When all the lacking components now come into the light, the task ahead seems enormous, and as it usually happens with goals too great to achieve, many people want to give up before they even start. However, it does not have to happen that way. There are several steps that can be taken in the mainstream schools that do not require any permission, directive or funding from the government. If one works with the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) as a reference document, it is easy to see certain obvious features that are lacking, or can be easily improved (see Figure 1: from the personal archive of the author). For example, some of the questions in the index are about whether the first contact of visitors to a school create in them a welcoming and friendly impression; if the information displayed is accessible to all, or if the displays in the school hall, corridors and classrooms reflect and celebrate the diversity of school members (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).



Figure 1. An example of the mainstream secondary school in Kazakhstan, Astana. The Figure illustrates the general environment in halls and corridors as seen by visitors.

It is up to the school administration and teachers to ensure that whenever anyone enters the school they are greeted with a smile, and made to feel welcome. The information displays can be translated into three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English and be in a large print. The school staff can also make sure that displays in halls and corridors reflect the life of the school as a community (see Figure 1). For example, there could be photos of pupils working together at the lessons, some photos from school trips or holidays. It would be ideal if these photos also celebrated ethnic, cultural, gender and other diversities of pupils and staff.

Moreover, it is important to start thinking of inclusion not only as a relationship to providing support to children with special educational needs. There is a broader view of inclusion, which includes meeting the needs of all children taking into account all their differences such as ethnic, gender, culture, family background, physical and mental health, and abilities (Reindal, 2016). If there is an understanding of accepting an individual as a whole with all the differences and peculiarities, then there is no need to try and classify people into groups. If the focus is put on the person first, then there will be no fragmentation and segregation. Changing the language to describe people is another thing that educators, administration, teachers, other staff in school can do to promote this idea. Trying to stay away from labels such as ‘ADHD kid’, ‘disabled person’ and use the ‘person first’ language is a small thing that can make a big difference on how people see themselves and others. In her article, *People First Language*, Snow (2007) states that changing the attitudes of educators towards children with disabilities, and seeing these children as having the potential to learn, makes a huge difference for their future. We must use this language to develop inclusion and respect for all.

Many questions on the Index of Inclusion deal with treating each other with respect, encouraging collaboration, working well together, creating partnerships among teachers, parents and local communities (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The leaders who can work with the index to promote changes, and make schools open and welcoming communities do not have to hold high managerial positions. They can be teachers in schools, parents, pupils, administration officials, government officials, school psychologists and other members of staff. It is important for both pupils and parents to feel the ownership of the school. They should feel that their opinion on how the school can be improved matters. This can be done by gathering feedback, and showing that those comments are taken seriously and acted upon. There can be more events where parents or members of local communities are invited to participate. There can be more assemblies and conferences, where inclusion would be the main focus of discussion. All these actions can support the process of creating a better environment for teaching and learning in schools, and everyone involved in the school community can be a part of it.

All in all, when people discuss the issue of barriers to implementing inclusion in Kazakhstan, they often focus on its schools’ capacity and facilities that require major reorganization and funding. However, the main assets and resources such as people, their values and experiences are very often overlooked (Bush, 2011). By applying the practical tools for reference, like the Index for Inclusion which emphasizes the development of inclusive culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), school leaders can determine the priorities, and start developing their schools as an inclusive community that welcomes diversity. Adopting collegial and cultural models at school levels would help staff and parents to implement inclusive policies and practices, and take a responsibility for making a school a better and stronger community. Instead of focusing alone on the absence of conditions and resources necessary for inclusive education, people should additionally turn their attention to whatever it is in their power to promoting

inclusive values and culture at schools now, as the Chinese proverb says: “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness”.

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Dilemma in Inclusive Education: How Amre Challenged the Policy of Proportions of Students With and Without Disabilities in an Inclusive Education Center

Kamila Rollan

This case study highlights a teacher's struggle to include a student with autism spectrum disorder into a classroom, where there is already a maximum number of students with special educational needs compliant to the principle of the natural proportions. This study provides a narrative of an ethical dilemma faced in the realization of the educational inclusion of a child with special needs. The case raises the following question: where is the line between adhering to the principles of the natural proportions and excluding a student? This qualitative narrative study facilitates a critical reflection of the dilemma in the inclusive educational leadership, when difficult decisions need to be made.

Keywords: dilemma, principles, the policy of proportion.

Case Study Context

In his book, *Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education*, Brahm Norwich (2013) makes the argument that although inclusive education is often portrayed as an exemplary and highly equitable model of education; there are multiple tensions and ethical dilemmas faced in its practical implementation. Exploring and reflecting on such dilemmas reveal the complexities surrounding inclusive education and serve as a teaching material to educational leaders, who aspire to promote this model of schooling. Therefore, this case study follows the logic of Norwich's investigation, and provides a narrative of an ethical dilemma faced in the realization of educational inclusion of a child with special needs. Narrative inquiry in a qualitative research allows the research process to take a form of a lived experience itself (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and justifies an absence of the traditional methodological elements and the focus on the story and the reflection instead.

This case study presents a teacher's personal story about a dilemma faced in her professional experience. The methodology behind this - while being a master's degree student studying in the field of inclusive education, she learned about the multiple barriers and efforts to implement the inclusive model and philosophy of education, and was eager to contribute to the improvement of the current situation. She realized that while necessary reform initiatives were being discussed, developed, and gradually implemented, the actual condition was such that the majority of children with disabilities studied in the specialized segregated institutions or on a home-school basis in Kazakhstan. This realization resulted in a goal to create conditions allowing children with special needs to study in a mainstream educational setting with their peers. Therefore, in October 2017, she opened a private educational center, which adheres to the principles of inclusive education, ensures student diversity and provides the necessary support to those with identified special educational needs (SEN). The center declared its openness to children with intellectual and behavioral difficulties, who had been previously denied the right to study in the mainstream schools. Therefore, many parents of children with special needs began contacting the center; the center's team worked on attracting students from the mainstream schools, who had not been identified any disability to attend the center. Four study groups were launched, each containing students both with and without disabilities.

A policy of the center was connected to the proportion of students with SEN in a classroom. This policy followed the principle of "natural proportions", according to which the representation of students with disabilities in the classroom should broadly reflect the proportion of people with disabilities in the society (Daniels & Garner, 1999; Giangreco et al., 1994). Since due to a lack of clear statistical data on the percentage of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan, and the natural proportion principle cannot be applied accurately, a limit of 20% of children with disabilities per classroom was set. This was necessary because if the proportion of children with disabilities became dominant, the center would have transformed itself into a specialized institution rather than an inclusive one. According to the teacher who opened the center, inclusive education was not about students with a disability, but rather about creating welcoming conditions for participation, achievement, and the well-being of all. Therefore, focusing mostly on students with disabilities to the extent of becoming a special classroom might mean ignoring the needs of those without disabilities, who also had their needs and concerns. This was the justification for the teacher and the center to set a limit to how many students with identified disabilities should be included.

Being located on one university campus, the center became known among the university community members and the staff. A dilemma appeared when one day a staff member of this university, who had a child with autism spectrum disorder, had learned about the center and asked to enroll her son. Amre, as the son henceforth to be referred to, had behavioral concerns that did not allow him to be included into the mainstream school; therefore his mother decided he would benefit from attending the center.

Dilemma Narrative

When Amre's mother arrived to enroll her son, there were only three students in the morning group, one of whom had the autism, another, who was from a low-income family, and a third, who did not have any identified special need. As there was already one child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) among three students, it was believed that they were not able to include more children with disabilities at that point unless more students without identified special needs were attracted to the center. The principle of 20/80 proportion was explained to Amre's mother, and she was suggested to consider enrolling him after more students enter the center. However, the mother reacted harshly; she had heard too many refusals in the past.

The mother explained that Amre has been always denied the right to attend a mainstream kindergarten, and then school, because of his behavioral difficulties. No school could bear with him for more than a month, after which the teachers and the administration used to conclude they could neither educate him, nor allow disrupt the classes. Amre's mother was referred to an inclusive education school, where he was not accepted as well. She then tried several expensive private schools, claiming that she was ready to pay any amount of the fee to get her son placed in a school, however, the private schools rejected her referrals. By the time she came to the center, she had felt already desperate and lonely, and almost started crying, while aggressively pushing the teacher, the director of the center, to enroll Amre. When the mother finished her speech, the center leadership felt confused and puzzled, and began to re-assess the principle of proportion, though both maintaining and forfeiting it carried their own risks.

The risk of accepting Amre was connected to the center's potential transition into a specialized service provider rather than remaining an inclusive center. At that point, there already existed one referral for placement from another parent of a child with special needs, who was told to wait until the center gets more students. This parent agreed with the principle of proportions, and did not further request the enrollment. Accepting Amre would have meant giving up the principle, and entailing the obligation to accept the child referred to previously, and maybe any other who would apply in the future.

On the other hand, the rejection of this referral would have resembled the exclusion, and a disregard of parental efforts to advocate for the inclusion of their child. This decision would be contrary of the center's value system and philosophy, and might also send a negative social message discouraging parents from further efforts to build a supportive community around their children.

Dilemma Outcome

As a result, the decision was made to include Amre into the morning group as an exception from the proportions principle. The teaching team of teachers then continued creating inclusive educational center, setting personal goals, and ensuring Amre had the necessary conditions to feel welcomed and perform well. Still, managing his behavior was problematic, especially during the first two weeks of classes. As a result, a parent of the student, who did not have disabilities, decided to withdraw her child from the courses. She thought having two peers with autism, and one peer from a low-income family in a group of four students, was not favorable for her son. That meant leaving the morning class with three students, all of whom had special educational needs. To some extent, the teacher's fear of her center turning into a specialized one realized.

After two months of such special educational arrangement, the center managed to attract more neurotypical students into their groups, which allowed them to solve the dilemma, and remain committed to the inclusive education model. However, it might have been not in the best interest of children and their families to study in a special class for two months. By being inclusive of children with disabilities without rigid commitment to the principles of proportion, the teacher failed with the promise to facilitate inclusive education. This dilemma strengthened her

position about the number of students with special needs favored in the classroom, but also made her exclusionary, due to a high demand from this group of students. Therefore, she views this dilemma as not being solved on a theoretical level, even though a practical solution was developed eventually. After some time, Amre started showing solid positive results in his academic performance and behavioral patterns.

Teaching Notes

1. This case study presents several lessons about dilemmas in education that refer to the concept called “spontaneous” inclusion, meaning an absence of policies and procedures concerning inclusive education, which often results in the poor implementation of given model and unplanned decisions with relation to educating children (Indenbaum, 2013). This might lead to the ineffectiveness of implementing inclusive education, and further misconceptions that this model is unworkable. Therefore, there is a great importance in setting policies, and firm plans when it comes to this field.
2. This narrative guided by the critical reflection allows concluding that there is a thin line between excluding a student with special needs, and adhering to the principles of the natural proportions. The difference is so small that it might even imply that building an inclusive class in a setting with a limited number of such options requires setting a limit, such as to how many students with special needs should be included. Low supply of inclusive schooling opportunities, and a high demand for them results in setting of the “20/80 proportions principle”.
3. Getting continuous referrals from parents meant that one day the teacher had to say ‘no’ to enrolling one more child with a disability. Therefore, inclusive education and the inclusion of students with disabilities are not the same ideas. It is important to remember that children without disabilities are at the focus of inclusive education as well. The line between inclusion of children with special needs, and favoring them might be thin, which highlights the nature of an ethical dilemma with Amre.

Questions for Discussion

1. It is commonly believed that parental advocacy is central to inclusive education reform. Do you think this case exemplifies effective parental advocacy?
2. What might be the best educational option for Amre? What are the benefits? What are the risks?
3. What might be the best educational option for those students without disabilities who were attending the center at the time when Amre came? What are the benefits? What are the risks?
4. Should an inclusive school reject students with special needs if there are more than 20% (or whatever percentage is identified according to natural proportions policy) of such students already?

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To Be or Not To Be: A Teacher Commitment in Meeting Students' Diverse Needs

Kymbat Saduakas

This case study presents the experience of a young teacher at a private educational center, who enthusiastically works as an English teacher, and has forty academic hours per week including additional responsibilities of being a curator, and providing students with extra lessons. This has not created any issues until the teacher has faced an equity dilemma with one of her students, who had a difficult family and financial situation that required the teacher to stay at the center longer, consequently obliging her to stay late evening hours at the workplace. This narrative inquiry examines the commitment teachers often make to meet their students' diverse needs, and calls students and teachers to reflect on the ethical issues implicated. The questions for discussion and teaching notes for meeting students' diverse needs are provided.

Keywords: teacher commitment, student diverse needs, equity.

Case Context

By exploring the experience of a young teacher working at the educational center, this narrative considers the commitment teachers frequently need to make to meet their students' diverse needs; and invites educational leaders, teachers and students to reflect on the ethical issues this inquiry implicates. It was the teacher's first year as an English teacher with a BA diploma in hand. She was very enthusiastic and passionate to start as soon as possible, and at the same time curious about how it would go. It was her sixth year teaching in Kazakhstan, and this time it was going to be completely different, because of the new city she was in – Astana, and all the new experiences and people it would bring.

Her workplace was a famous private educational center. It had campuses in almost every city of Kazakhstan and was very famous for successfully getting students prepared for the UNT (United National Test), and entrance exams to BIL (Knowledge and Innovation Lyceum, previously known as KTL – Kazakh-Turkish Lyceum) and NIS (Nazarbayev Intellectual School). Hence, most of the students wishing to prepare for these exams outside their school would at least consider the center as a place to study at. It also provided extracurricular lessons of most of the subjects for grades from 4 to 11.

The campus the teacher worked at was in a very crowded part of Astana. There were many schools around it, thus the location was very convenient for students. During the first month of the new academic year about 400 students enrolled, and by the end of October there were approximately 700 students studying at the center. Being the only English teacher at the center, she gave lessons to every English language class, totaling forty academic hours per week.

In addition to teaching, all teachers were required to be curators of at least one group. The responsibilities of a curator included guiding the groups in their academic progress, providing psychological support, encouraging parental involvement and participating in extra-curricular activities with students. Moreover, teachers at the center were obliged to provide extra lessons for students who were falling behind. These were usually done on Sundays, there were seven full working days.

New Groups - New Challenges

In the middle of October the new teacher was assigned as curator to three 11th grade groups of around 15 students each. They were preparing for the UNT, this required a thorough control and guidance in order to achieve progress and results. The first meeting occurred during the week after lessons (around 8 pm), where they introduced themselves to each other, the teacher explained the action plan within that academic year; all the commitments they needed to be prepared for and explained her own responsibilities towards them. One of her responsibilities was encouraging parental involvement, which also included visiting the students' families in their home environment.

The idea was to meet with parents and caregivers outside the center to enhance the interpersonal relationships with them; if a parent did not wish to invite a teacher over to their home it was acceptable and they would meet somewhere else. Fortunately, being Kazakh involves a focus on hospitality, so most of the parents invited her to their homes. There they would eat, drink tea, and talk about the child – child’s personality, likes and dislikes, opportunities and challenges. They would also talk about each others’ lives to get a deeper understanding of who they were, therefore building a trusting and positive relationship.

Case Narrative

After the first meeting with the group, almost everyone went home as it was already 8.30 pm. However, one girl named Guldana asked if she could stay a bit longer in order to study. The teacher was tired as she was working from 9 am to 8 pm (the regular working time-table) that day, but she had a lesson the following day, which required more preparation, so she had a chance to get it finished before going home and relaxing. They, therefore, spent an hour more at the center. At around 9.30 pm Guldana rushed outside in order to catch her last bus home, waving and thanking the teacher for the opportunity to stay late and study. The teacher was very happy to have such a hard-working student in her class, but hadn’t thought of the challenges that would arise because of her.

The following day, upon asking other teachers about Guldana’s academic performance, the teacher learnt that though responsible and hardworking, she was below the average, so needed a lot of preparation to get a scholarship to study at the university. Thus, she decided to visit Guldana’s parents in order to encourage them to support and constantly motivate Guldana with her studies. Unfortunately, she couldn’t meet with her parents immediately as they were always busy, and couldn’t even come to the center or meet her at their workplace to discuss Guldana’s progress. About two months passed, and the teacher still had not met the parents, though she had spoken to them on the telephone. Meanwhile, Guldana asked to stay late and study at the center almost every day. Sometimes the teacher would agree, but most of the time she felt physically and emotionally tired, or had other things to do, so she would politely refuse. She would also explain to her that in order to study beneficially, Guldana also needed to have a good rest and spend time with her family.

One day, she decided to ask her if her parents were free that day so that she could meet with them. She called them and they said to come over that evening with Guldana. Her lessons finished at 7.45 pm as usual. Right after, she accompanied Guldana to her home by taxi, which took about 20 minutes. She hadn’t realized she lived so far away from the center. By bus it would make even longer. This meant Guldana spent much time travelling to the center and back home each day. Getting out of the car at Guldana’s home, the teacher looked around and understood they were in a disadvantaged part of the city. The apartment buildings seemed old and dirty. When they entered the building, she noticed a very bad smell. Walking up the stairs, she saw children running in the corridors, and people walking back to their rooms after having a bath. She realized that this was a dormitory for families. The moment she entered Guldana’s family’s room, she felt so *guilty* for those times she hadn’t been able to stay late with her to study, because now she understood the reason Guldana has requested it. The room’s area was 8 m². She lived there with her parents, an elder brother, and two small brothers aged around four and seven years. There was no place where she could actually sit and study. As she related later, the family would go to sleep at around 10 pm as they were usually very tired after work, so she couldn’t switch on the lights.

The teacher talked with the parents for over an hour. They were good people, struggling to pay for all their children’s bills. Guldana’s brother was already working as a security, and was responsible for paying for Guldana’s studies at the center. Her mother was a nurse, and her father worked as a loader. During the discussion, Guldana’s parents said that if she didn’t get a scholarship, they wouldn’t be able to pay for her university, so she wouldn’t study, but rather work to help them financially.

After arriving home that evening, the teacher realized she had a dilemma inside her – *to be or not to be there for Guldana*. She knew she had to help her get that scholarship, which meant that she would stay late most evenings to provide her with the necessary conditions to study. On the other hand, however, she knew how she would feel the following day when she hadn’t gotten enough sleep at night. Coming home after 10 pm meant that she would go to sleep after midnight, creating a deficiency in her teaching role towards the other students. If she had had weekends or at least Sundays free to have a proper rest, she wouldn’t have been concerned, but Saturday was a

full working day until 7.45 pm, and on Sundays there were also extra lessons and extra-curricular activities with the 11th graders.

Case Outcome

Yet, this indecision lasted for less than 10 minutes. She was committed to her profession, and knew there was nobody else to help Guldana, so her decision was to do whatever was in her power to help her get that scholarship, and have a chance to be independent and hopefully enter a profession in the end for her personal and family's happiness and success. She explained Guldana's situation to her teachers, so that they would pay more attention to her, and provide her with extra lessons if needed. They stayed at the center until 9.30 or 10.30 pm seven days a week, and on Sundays they would finish after 6 pm. She acquired the keys to the center from the principal, so that she could close it as she was the last one to leave. This agreement didn't come easily, because the principal was against the teachers staying at the workplace after lessons were finished. This way March came closer, and Guldana made huge progress in her UNT sample exams.

At the beginning of March, Guldana announced that she wouldn't be able to study at the center anymore. There were only two months left until the exam, and it was very important to keep studying even harder, but her brother had lost his job, so she couldn't pay. The teacher asked the principal whether they could provide Guldana with a discount, though she already had a 5% discount for being one of the first to register in September, and a 10% discount for living in a large family. The principal explained that giving Guldana a discount would encourage other students to ask for it, as there were others at the center that might also be in difficult financial situations. The teacher insisted saying that nobody actually knows how much others pay, so if they told Guldana not to tell anyone, she would understand and not disclose this information. Thus, the principal decided to give her a 20% discount in addition to the existing ones. In total she had a 35% discount, but it was still not enough. Hence, the teacher decided to pay half of the remaining cost, which would bring Guldana's contribution down to only fifteen thousand tenge.

In June, Guldana wrote the UNT. In August, her results showed that Guldana had gotten a scholarship to study towards her chosen profession in one of Almaty's good universities. The scholarship, a state grant would also cover her living accommodation and provide a monthly stipend.

Teaching Notes

1. This case study examines the commitment teachers often make to meet their students' diverse needs. The teaching profession can be a hard one to work in, mainly because teachers are always working with different people, that include the administration, parents, and students; all having diverse needs and personalities. Being full of physical and emotional energy is one of the key factors influencing teacher's efficacy.

2. To be an effective teacher, one needs to be flexible, both in one's attitude, and in other parts of one's life. It also requires certain commitments, which may be hard to make, but this is the way quality education works. In this case the teacher knew that the UNT requires constant and thorough preparation; that's why it was important for her student to get on the right track, and to keep studying continuously. Though it was difficult for the teacher to sacrifice her personal time and health, she knew she was doing the right thing. However, there are questions, provided below, that are crucial to bear in mind.

Questions for Discussion

1. What about other students like Guldana? Are there people who can help them? How can we identify such students at private educational centers, and what can we do for them?
2. How often and to what extent should a teacher make commitments in meeting students' diverse needs?
3. Is it acceptable for teachers to work in the way described in this case?
4. Were there any other alternatives for Guldana?
5. Could other stakeholders be involved to respond to Guldana's needs, such as parents, the principal, administration, other teachers or someone else?

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One Size Does Not Fit All: A Case of a Student Who Encountered a Problem in an Exam

Assem Rakhimbekova

Drawing on a narrative story of a gifted student, who studies at the school for gifted children, and who suffers from stuttering that made him difficult to articulate his words and deliver his ideas properly, this case study draws the attention to the problem of children with special educational needs, who are neglected at schools and have to cope with the study tasks that are designed for normal and gifted children. The case begins with describing the case genre and the context of the school setting, and then explores the events and challenges faced by a student, who encounters a problem in an exam. This narrative research asks readers to consider how teachers and school leaders must accommodate learners with special needs.

Keywords: stutter, gifted children, external summative exam.

Case Genre and Context

As a distinct form of qualitative research, a narrative design allows reporting the experience of individuals, and the discussion of the meaning of those experiences for the individuals and community (Creswell, 2012). Narrative inquiry affirms the relevance of learning from participants in a setting, while the learning occurs through the stories narrated by individuals, such as teachers or students; and the literature plays a minor role in directing the study (Creswell, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hare, 2010). This case presents a narrative of the experience of a boy with special educational needs, who encountered a problem in an exam while studying in a school for gifted children; the study employs pseudonyms for the main characters.

Amir was accepted in a school for gifted children when he was thirteen years old, since the school only accepted students from grade seven. He passed all the necessary examinations on the following subjects: mathematics, the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages; and logical thinking. He was accepted as one of the students who scored the most points. All the exams were in a written format, and Amir did not have to pass any oral examinations, which would have been very challenging for him as he spoke with a stutter. He suffered from stuttering, and it was very difficult for him to articulate his words and deliver his ideas properly. Although, as his mother once stated during a parental meeting, Amir spoke better, albeit with a slight stutter, when he was at home in a surrounding where he felt comfortable and free. Amir's curator also claimed that he spoke with a slight stutter when he communicated with his peers, and that he would even sometimes relate anecdotes to his friends. Amir was one of the high performing students in his class. He excelled in mathematics, physics and chemistry. He also demonstrated a very good knowledge in his IT lessons. Language teachers also highlighted his strengths saying that he wrote very good essays, compositions and other written works. However, they also stated that it was very difficult for Amir to narrate a story, or express his opinions before the class or a teacher. Amir also participated in extra-curricular activities; he played the dombra, a Kazakh national instrument, professionally and participated in various musical contests and competitions. Overall, he was one of the high achieving and well-performing students at the school. The only thing that he struggled with was his speech.

School Setting and Regulations. The school, where Amir was enrolled, accepted children on a competitive basis, enabling to educate gifted or talented children. The curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning processes were organized to serve the children at the school. These children were assessed formatively at every lesson. Then at the end of the term they wrote summative examinations on different subjects. The school also provided tutorials and extra-curricular activities to support children who needed additional lessons. In grade ten, students pass external summative examinations on the following subjects: mathematics, Kazakh, English, and another subject that is chosen by the learners. The external English language exam includes four parts: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Each section of the exam is held according to strict timeline limitations. Listening is 30 minutes, and one hour is allocated to reading and writing. The speaking exam is usually conducted on a different day. Each student is given a fixed time (5-10 minutes) during which he or she is to complete all the tasks. All the parts of the

exam are summed up and students get their final results. This exam is obligatory and students prepare for it with their teachers and attend extra special classes. The teachers are very supportive and always ready to help learners.

Case Narrative

Problem and Teachers' Concern. When Amir was in grade ten, the time to take his external summative exams arrived. Amir did not want to show his concern about the speaking exam, however, his English language teacher did worry about this. Amir's teacher and examiner felt the need to take some steps before the actual exam, while his teacher stated that she had no concerns about the various sections of the exam except the speaking part. Extra classes were set up to prepare him for the exam and Amir received additional support and help. The issue with Amir and his possible failure was taken to the vice principal, who was very supportive of Amir, since he was aware of his strengths as well as his speech disorder. The decision was taken to talk to the principal and to write an explanatory letter to the committee, which was in Astana, explaining them that the child required additional time (not 5-10, but 15-20 minutes) to pass the speaking exam. Providing an additional time for student is both common and acceptable practice in special needs accommodations, including cases of English language learners (Schissel, 2014).

False Expectations. The actual day of the exam was imminent. The preparation procedure was successful, and most students felt confident. However, Amir felt differently. He did not want to show his anxiety, but it could be detected from his behavior. Surprisingly, Amir's parents were uninterested in the exam procedure, even though they knew that he was going to face a huge challenge. Moreover, he was an A student who was expected to obtain Altyn Belgi, the mark awarded to an excellent student in the Kazakh education system, the equivalent of the Gold Medal. Hence, if he failed the exam he could lose the opportunity to get Altyn Belgi, which would be another stress for him.

Case Outcome

Two days before the exam the vice principal was approached. He said that there was no response from the examination committee regarding the possibility of providing an additional time for Amir. On the last day before the exam, the vice principal stated that the rules given by the external exam committee could not be broken, and that Amir would be given the fixed time to take the speaking exam. This demonstrated the unfortunate and high educational accountability, and the top down approach of the educational system in the country that placed Amir undue pressure and stress. However, both his examiner and his English teacher, tried to support and help him, and this help proved beneficial for his emotional well-being. As Brookfield (1995) states, the care giving role of teachers is much more important in developing and maintaining children's emotional states rather than only developing their cognitive skills, which is why it was crucial that Amir would feel supported throughout the process. The other valuable idea by Brookfield (1995) involves building restorative relationships with learners who are generally excluded. One of the four techniques that was suggested by him was a 'non abandonment', which implies that a child is not alone, and is not abandoned by others with his problem, instead teachers try to support him, which helps him to feel open, unsuspecting, and unafraid of his environment (Brookfield, 1995). Hence, the support, that Amir's teachers provided, helped him feel safe and secure, despite his challenge. On the actual day of the exam Amir's teachers understood that it was meaningless to wait for reasonable solutions from the administration of the school and other authorities, as they supported the idea that *one size fits all* learners and all of them should cope with this successfully. Because Amir could only pass the exam successfully if he was provided with additional time, it was necessary to come up with a solution that would best work for him. It was decided to allow him to answer as many questions as he could, and assess him on only his possible three or four answers as he would only manage to answer three questions out of six. The result was that Amir successfully passed all his examinations, and demonstrated his will to learn and combat difficult situations.

As educators, teachers should have the confidence and a sense of care and love towards their learners. One of the valuable ideas that have emerged from Amir's situation is that learners' strengths should be assessed prior to their weaknesses, because their strengths help them to overcome their weaknesses. Amir's strengths helped his teachers to believe in him and his abilities.

Teaching Notes

1. This case invites teachers and school leaders to think about their practices and of the 'one size does not fit all' approach. It is important remembering that every child has his own strengths and weaknesses, which should be taken into account.
2. This case also raises the issue of high educational accountability and the top-down approach in the system of education.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you evaluate the case?
2. What might be the alternative solutions for this case?
3. If you were the principal of this school or one of the members of the administration, how would you address the problem?
4. Was the decision taken by the teachers reasonable and fair enough with regards to other students?

Suggested Readings

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A Case Study: What is Better for His Future?

Natalya Manuilova

This case describes the implementation of inclusive education within a mainstream secondary school on the example of the experience of a student with a cognitive developmental delay, whose special educational needs limit his academic participation and socialization in a school learning environment. The policy initiative is administered by the school principal who needs to make a decision about the best option in addressing the situation. This case narrative both highlights the complexity of the policy execution, the challenges the school principal encounters when designing actions in ensuring student's participation; and reflects ethical issues involved in the provision of special educational services. While there are no straightforward solutions to meeting all students' diverse needs, this case provides helpful lessons for educational leaders working in accommodating students with special educational needs.

Keywords: inclusion, leadership, mainstream school, special school, student development.

Case Narrative

This case narrates the story of the school principal, who implements inclusive education in a school, and describes the experience of a student with a cognitive developmental delay, whose special educational needs hinder learner's academic participation and socialization in a school learning environment. While describing the complexity of the policy execution, this narrative provides some practical lessons for educational leaders working in accommodating learners with special educational needs; the study employs pseudonyms for the characters.

Laura, will henceforth be referred to, has recently become a principal in the state secondary school of Karaganda, Kazakhstan. The school exists since 1992 and annually enrolls about 500 students living in the assigned district. Most of the students in this school are from the middle-income families, and about 20% of students are from low-income households, who receive government support. Over the course of several years, this school has been known for the high rates in student academic achievement tests and teaching quality assessments. The majority of school educators are highly qualified veteran teachers with over 25 years working experience in teaching positions.

Although this is a mainstream school, Laura with her previous experience in inclusive educational leadership decided to modify the school vision and mission to make it inclusive for diverse students. She views teaching methods and practices as the key to successful implementation of inclusive education, and strongly believes that every child can learn regardless of their abilities and needs.

Laura initiated a meeting with the school staff to introduce core values and principles of inclusion, and to discuss strategic development of inclusive practices in the new school. Before this meeting she conducted a short survey about common and specific teacher concerns, questions and suggestions that her colleagues had regarding the school transformation. This allowed her to form a clear understanding of the existent challenges that teachers faced in their classrooms to further address them with appropriate inclusive practices.

A case of Adil, will henceforth be referred to, a teenager from the 8th grade, has drawn her attention the most because all teachers who worked in his class submitted complaints and concerns about his behavioral issues and low academic performance. Therefore, Laura decided to take a closer look at this case with the hope to resolve the issue in the nearest future.

Having explored the background of this student, Laura found out that he comes from a low-income family, and was abandoned by both parents at a very young age. Grandmother is assigned as his official caregiver at the moment, but her poor health condition does not allow her to be fully engaged in child's development. Adil is a new student at this school, the majority of the school years he spent at a different state school in Karaganda, which was closed recently due to a low number of enrolled students. Adil's problems with cognitive development and socialization are now the main concerns for teachers in the new school. He has difficulties with following the curriculum and processing new information, hyperactivity and distracted attention, which lead to problems with following teachers' instructions, he also has poor memory and difficulties in social interactions caused by rather

aggressive attitude towards his peers. As most of the teachers in his class are veteran teachers, they have a certain pattern for effective teaching practices and norming behavior of students (Brookfield, 1995). Adil does not fall into the norming pattern, and as the result is excluded from the general class participation.

Because of his behavior and negative teachers' attitudes towards his class engagement, the school has sent Adil to the Psychological Medical Pedagogical Commission (PMPC) to determine whether he should continue education at a mainstream school or be transferred to the special one (MES, 2014). PMPC diagnosed Adil with a cognitive developmental delay and a generalized anxiety disorder which resulted in their recommendation to educate the student in a specialized educational institution with a simplified curriculum that Adil would be able to follow easily.

Having received the PMPC recommendation, teachers strongly insist on transferring Adil to a special school because he disturbs the overall teaching and learning process in his class and cannot follow the standard curriculum. His teachers also highlight that they lack knowledge on provision for special educational needs, and are not able to apply individualized teaching practices for specific needs of Adil. Besides, they are concerned that their focus on inclusive practices will increase workload and might result in decreased achievement of other students. Apart from that, they are largely concerned with Adil's participation in the Unified National Test next year as his failure in the exam might result in the lower school rating and poor assessment of teachers' performance.

Laura, on the other hand, being a strong advocate for inclusive education believes that students with special needs should be educated in the less restrictive mainstream school environment. But instead of competing with their typically developing peers, they should work on the individualized educational plan (IEP) which sets attainable goals for diverse students and is designed with respect to their needs (ANAE, 2015; Turnbull, 1995). She understands, however, that in-service school teachers do not know how to develop and work on IEPs. Moreover, at the moment they are confident that it is too late to start working on Adil's academic and social development (Brookfield, 1995; Razer & Friedman, 2017). It requires a lot of time to deliver knowledge on inclusive education and work with IEP to these teachers and during this time Adil will continue being left behind. However, as he is a high school student and will soon leave school this case asks for immediate actions.

Laura also contacted Adil's grandmother regarding his problems at school to discuss PMPC recommendation. However, grandmother is strongly against sending Adil to a special school being confident that he is able to learn in the mainstream one without striving for excellence in education.

Now Laura is faced with a dilemma. She understands that her mainstream school cannot accommodate Adil's needs at this very moment, which results in his exclusion being a struggling and low performing student. His social interactions are also quite negative as he often shows aggressive behavior towards peers and even teachers. Thus, it is unlikely that Adil's participation and education will be effective in this school. But even though the special school can offer the simplified curriculum attainable for Adil, this is most likely to result in his further marginalization due to the restricted environment, isolation from mainstream peers, as well as due to stigma associated with students from special schools which might limit Adil's future education and employment perspectives (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006).

Then Laura started to explore the previous school experience of Adil. She reviewed available materials and met with some of his previous teachers. They admitted that problems with Adil's development and behavior emerged mainly in his early teenage years. He struggled with following the curriculum and new subjects added from the 5th grade which resulted in his overall low motivation to study. Most teachers allowed him to be inactive in the classroom as long as he was quiet and did not disturb the lesson. On the other hand, from the 6th grade at the previous school Adil developed a great interest in boxing, and entered a student boxing club which helped with his anger management. After being transferred to the new school, which does not have a boxing or fighting club, now Adil accumulates aggressive energy and then is more likely to attack his classmates to release this energy. Grandmother cannot afford sending Adil to private fighting clubs as even with the government support, they live in a quite poor household.

Case Solution

Laura decides that her school should try everything possible in the current conditions to include Adil to the educational and socialization process by addressing his development via designing an IEP for him. She conducted a teachers' meeting and explained her concerns regarding the possible marginalization of Adil. Several teachers agreed to work on accommodating his needs by setting SMART goals for his personal, academic and social development. Then, Laura invited teachers from the special school to share their knowledge on simplified school curriculum with her school staff. Together they developed an IEP for Adil for the period of 6 months. After this time, the teachers decided to access Adil's progress to further decide whether this initiative was successful, so he could stay at the mainstream school or should be educated in the specialized institution if it fails.

The Educational Department of Karaganda which controls participation and students' achievements in the UNT and conducts other national testing in this region, has additionally reviewed this case by school request and released Adil from passing the exam next year. However, he can still pass it after the 11th grade given that his development according to the IEP is successful. Laura's school concluded that with the positive results in Adil's specialized learning with more time they can prepare him for examination to pass it at least at the minimum level, which is important in enabling then to continue education at vocational school or college and, thus, provide better opportunities for his future.

Then, Laura decides to conduct a survey among parents to find out how many of them would be interested in sending their children to a boxing or fighting section. If the number would be sufficient she can apply for the school financial support to open such section at her school. This will help Adil and potentially other students to manage their aggressive behavior. But if there are not enough parents and students interested in this section, Laura decides to discuss the possibility of funding Adil's participation in private boxing lessons.

Another important aspect that Laura sees in this transformative process is working with school teachers on establishing the inclusive vision for the school and equipping them with knowledge on effective practices to engage all students in the learning process with them having exceptional talents, having special educational needs, being average or falling behind (Grace, 2005). To do that, she decides to invite local and international practitioners of inclusive education, namely, teachers from pilot inclusive school of Karaganda, Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Karaganda and students from Nazarbayev University Inclusive Education cohort residing in Karaganda. They are expected to exchange their knowledge and experience on design and implementation of inclusive education within this secondary school.

Laura sees herself as an action-oriented leader and believes that she in the position of the school principal can be the example of an inclusive practitioner to motivate other teachers to do the same. Even if the case of Adil will not be successful, it is still likely to start the process of change in this school, and more students with diverse needs will receive the necessary attention and the inclusion as the result.

Teaching Notes

1. This case explores participation, as well as personal, academic and social development of the student with a cognitive developmental delay within a mainstream educational environment. The main teaching board is reluctant to change towards inclusive education and this further negatively affects students' development leaving them behind. This emphasizes the role of the principal as the example of an inclusive education leader in designing actions that ensure student participation at the individual level and work towards attainable goals in his case (Ross & Gray, 2006).
2. The need for a change of the teaching practices and avoiding norming frameworks for students is also highlighted in this case. The movement towards inclusive education is the way to ensure the successful education of all children regardless their diverse needs and abilities.
3. Judging from the context of this study, when working in accommodating special needs of students in mainstream school settings and developing inclusive environment for everyone, educational leaders should start establishing a clear and shared vision for inclusion of diverse students at their schools. Having achieved this shared vision will eliminate possible negative or reluctant views and attitudes among the people directly involved in different school processes, including teachers, administrators, school service staff, parents, students with and without special needs. Action-oriented leadership, when all principal's actions are focused on inclusive values, is a

promising approach in sharing common vision for developing inclusive school settings.

Questions for Discussion

1. Did the school leadership make a right decision in Adil's case? What else can schools do in such cases?
2. What role do parents and caregiver play in Adil's upbringing and personal development?
3. Can the school influence the decision of family about Adil's future?
4. What is the best way to educate and develop Adil for his future success in life?
5. Should he stay at the mainstream school, or is it more effective for him to study in the special one?
6. What can Adil's family do to improve his development?

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Focus and Scope

Primarily focused on educational reform in Kazakhstan, this journal presents original, English-language, scholarly work in the form of empirical studies, critical article/book reviews, theoretical analysis papers and evaluative policy analysis papers. Published articles will fall broadly into the categories of 1) higher education, 2) school leadership, 3) inclusive education, 4) multi-lingual education and 5) pre-school education. Topics include but are not limited to the following:

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