

STUDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS CO-EDUCATION WITH DISABLED PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Building efficient relationships with partners in student teams is one of the most important factors for integrating the students with disabilities to social environment of a higher educational institution. Attitudes of healthy students towards joint educational and training programs with disabled students play crucial role in achieving this goal. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate and analyze the attitudes of students of pedagogical universities and institutes towards joint training with people with disabilities. It describes basic prerequisites of personal relationship to disability ideas of healthy students about possible types of relationships with students with disabilities and their degree of readiness for the establishment of equal interpersonal relationships. According to the authors, the most important indicator of success of interpersonal relationships of healthy students with people with disabilities is a respectful and equal relationship, desire to work and cooperate with them. The results of experimental studies indicate varying degrees of tolerance of students depending on whether they have experience of joint training to people with disabilities. It was found out that for students who have experience of joint training with the disabled, social barriers and support segregation towards students with disabilities is typical to a lesser extent as well as compassion and desire to help and to much more extent-equitable and tolerant attitude, pursuit for cooperation and partnership.

Keywords: Contextual Conditions, Students, Higher Education, Tolerance, Interpersonal Relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern society is impossible without respect for rights and freedoms of all of its members as well as without their active involvement in various activities and allowing all citizens an access to quality education for further self-realization in professional work. The most essential is to enhance the educational level of individuals with disabilities in order to actively involve them into work and enhance their competitiveness in the labor market. At the same time one of the most powerful means of adaptation is the process of sharing studying in higher educational institutions with healthy peers because in addition to acquisition of the specialty, the student with problems in intellectual or physical development is able to communicate with peers. In the course of this communication, students with disabilities enrich their social, communicative experience, which promotes active inclusion of this category into the

system of social relations (Eckes, 2005; Eriksson, 2004; Horn, 2007; Johnson, 2006; Jorgensen, 2005).

Providing opportunities for people with disabilities with effective and quality higher education contributes to maximum development of their potential ability, competitiveness and opportunities for high-paying jobs, further successful employment, which ultimately contributes to their self-affirmation and full self-realization as normal representatives of modern society. This is also evidenced by one of provisions (2006) of the Convention of the Disabled Persons Rights ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan 20 February 2015 which refers to the need to provide persons with disabilities in all countries with access to general higher education, vocational training, adult education and training throughout life without discrimination and on an equal basis with others (Rights, 2015).

In order to provide people with disabilities with effective and quality higher education by the State Program of Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019 years (2016), it is foreseen to create conditions for their training in 100% of higher education institutions by 2019 (Program, 2016).

Currently, all educational institutions of Kazakhstan implement different models of higher education for the disabled. Thus, in academic year 2015/16 data were collected from 37 high schools to indicate that 852 students with disabilities studied there, among them 660 people-at full-time, 5 people-remotely and 28 people at the correspondence department. Table 1 presents the distribution of students by type of disability.

A number of students with	Form of education					A number of students on types		
Totally	full-time	remote	correspondence department	Motor function impairment	Hearing impairment	Vision impairment	Speech impairment	Somatic diseases
852	660	5	28	222	68	163	18	381

Despite some progress in providing access to higher education for people with disabilities, there are certain difficulties and restrictions for them in receiving qualitative higher vocational education up to this time. At the same time one of these constraints is the problem of social and psychological adaptation of students with disabilities and barriers in communication with healthy peers in higher education institution.

At the same time, successful inclusion of a person with disabilities into the process of higher and postgraduate education is possible only in a university with a healthy moral foundation, welcoming and equitable interpersonal communication and tolerance (Barazandeh, 2005; Dutta, 2009; Fuller, 2004; Grebenuk, 2008). It was confirmed by multiple international researches such as (Vyahyakuopus & Kantor, 2009; Zarubina, 2006; Murashko, 2007; Kondratyeva, 2010; Safonova, 2011; Zolberg, 2007; Kraska, 2003; Barnes, 2004; Stodden et al., 2006; Shevlin, 2004), they address issues of higher education of persons with disabilities and

justified demands to psycho-pedagogical, logistical and other conditions of the educational process in universities (Barnes, 2004; Kondratyeva, 2010; Kraska, 2003; Murashko, 2007; Safonova, 2011; Shevlin, 2004; Stodden, 2006; Vyahyakuopus, 2009; Zarubina, 2006; Zolberg, 2007). Especially relevant becomes this requirement to institutions and universities that train future teachers as a new system of values should be adopted by teachers, should have psychological setting onto tolerance and political correctness, should have the appropriate level of value orientations and professional and personal development, have the ability to overcome old stereotypes, to think independently and to have wide interests. Accordingly, it becomes an actual problem of identifying relationship of students enrolled in universities into teaching professions, co-education with people with disabilities in order to determine the need for psychological and educational work for development of their culture of tolerance.

Objectives, Methodology and Research Design

The aim of the present study was to determine the attitudes and the level of psychological readiness of students of pedagogical universities for joint training with their peers with disabilities.

To achieve the goal of this research, the following tasks were set forth:

1. To determine the value of interpersonal relationships and communication in implementation of inclusive education.
2. To identify the degree of readiness of students of pedagogical universities to establish equal interpersonal relationships with peers with limited opportunities for development.
3. To determine basic directions of formation of readiness of students of pedagogical universities to establish equal interpersonal relationships.

In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study, the following steps were used in the study, taking into account the specifics of the subject of research:

1. Theoretical analysis of legal, psycho-pedagogical and methodological literature on the subject of the study.
2. Experimental study of students' attitudes towards disability in general and to opportunities of joint studying with people with disabilities at the university.
3. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of research results.

Several psychological and pedagogical studies have been conducted on the communications and currently there are many definitions of communication. Mostly, communication is reviewed as the interaction of two (or more) people aimed at harmonization and unification of their efforts to establish relations and achieve a common result. We agree with those researchers who believe that communication with persons with disabilities is not just an act, but interaction indeed: it is carried out between the parties, each of which is a carrier of activity and assumes it to their partners (Bulanda, Bruhn, Byro-Johnson & Zentmyer, 2014; Hulsman, 2013; Martin et al., 2011; Strolin-Goltzman, Sisselman, Melekis & Auerbach, 2014; Werner, 2012). In addition to mutual orientation of action in communication of healthy students and their peers with disabilities, the most important is the presence of each participant of activity, i. e. each member acts as the subject of communication. Activity may be expressed by the fact that the person proactively acts in communicating with his/her partner and the partner in his/her turn accepts impacts and responds to them. When two people communicate, they alternately act and perceive impacts of each other. The value of this communication peculiarity is emphasized by (Asio & Khorasani, 2015; Kolominskii, 2000; Leontyev, 1999).

Accordingly, in advanced scientific research communication works communication is regarded as one of the leading criteria of human evolution, an important factor in formation of personality, the main type of activity aimed at evaluation and self-perception of a man in interaction with other people (Berko, 2010; Kunicina, 2001; Vygotskii, 1983). An important condition indicating presence of a true dialog is considered as the ability to identify, to be able to identify with the partner in communication, to the ability to embark to a different point of view, i.e., dialog is present each time in communication. Several studies (Gulcur, 2007; Jung, 2003; Moller, 2007; Putnam, 2003; Rao, 2004; Yorgan, 2006) considered productively developing environment as the main method of optimization of interpersonal relations of students with mental and physical problems.

Some authors studying the students' attitudes toward their peers with disabilities, have concluded that the presence of certain relationships between the variables "sex" and "disability", concluding that the most preferred environment for socio-psychological adaptation of disabled students in higher education is the sphere of humanitarian education and training predominantly inside female student group (Goncharov, 2002). Despite the controversial findings of recent studies on this regard, there is general consensus that students with disabilities have limited option to choose their specialties and future professions.

Psycho-pedagogical studies proved that getting higher education by disabled is being implemented in a specific socio-cultural environment of high school which is formed by directives of three groups of participants-student environment, teachers and administration of higher education institutions. Each of these groups is characterized by their own views about peculiarities of education of students with disabilities and their specific perceptions. At this, the most important contextual condition for integration of students with disabilities into the social environment of higher educational institution is relationship in student group.

Describing positive interpersonal relations between people, psychology experts use the term "flourishing relationships". These interpersonal relationships are characterized by lack of "stigma" and prejudices regarding people with disabilities and presence of proximity, elevation and stability (Caldwell, 2001; Lam, Lam, Lam & Sun, 2015; Sadow, 2002; Volmer, 2008). In progressive interpretation of paradox of tolerance, it is represented as an individual's or a group's ability to get along with other people or communities that are characterized by different mentality and way of life. Tolerance is expressed as readiness to accept others as they are and keep interacting with them based on consent.

The process of bringing-up of tolerance implies purposeful organization of positive (overcoming negative) experience of tolerance, i.e. creating a space of direct or indirect interaction with people other by health, attitudes or behavior, their communities, in other words- the coexistence of the different.

To identify internal intention of healthy students and their personal relationship to co-education with persons with disabilities a special experimental study in the form of quiz was held. Research dedicated to degree of readiness of students of pedagogical institutes to establish equal interpersonal relationships with peers with disabilities conducted in 2013-2015 at psychological and pedagogical faculties of two pedagogical institutes. The pilot study involved 126 students-future teachers who had no experience of combined learning with peers with disabilities and 48 students studying together with people with impaired mental and physical development.

Quiz survey consisted of several sets of questions aimed onto the study of:

1. Personal attitudes towards people with disabilities,

2. Attitude of students to co-education with disabled persons,
3. Attitude of health students to collaborative studying together with students with various types of impaired development.

The obtained results of the study clearly showed that there are some differences in responses of students who have not had experience of collaborative studying with peers with disabilities and students with people with impaired mental and physical development. So, when answering the question "What are feelings which appear by you if you see a young man with disabilities?" the students presented in Table 2 and Figure 1 showed different answers. The students who did not the experience of joint training programs with peers with disabilities, in 63% of cases revealed significant sympathy, 73.8% expressed pity and 51.6% showed desire to help seeing a young man with disabilities.

Table 2		
ATTITUDES OF HEALTHY STUDENTS TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (%)		
	Attitudes of students towards people with disabilities	
	Students having no experience in joint studying with peers with disability (SNE)	Students having experience in joint studying with peers with disability (SHE)
Pity, compassion	73.8	39.5
Rejection	0	0
Disgust	0	0
Wish to help	51.6	62.5
Wish to cooperate: friendship and cooperation	37.3	75

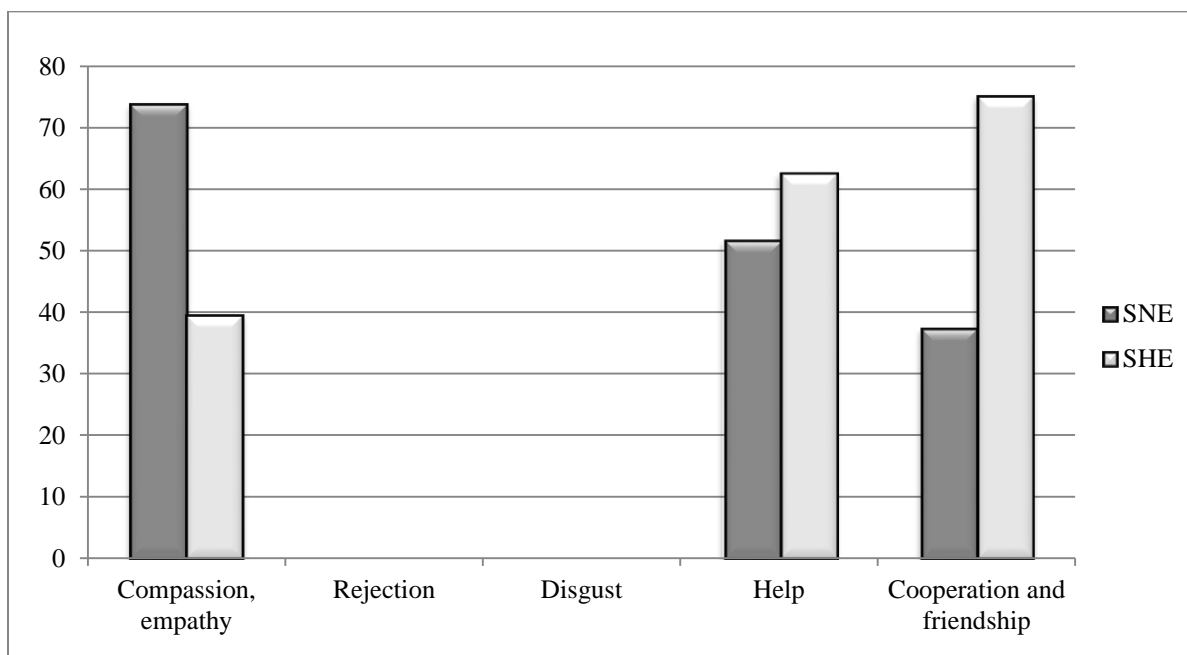


FIGURE 1
ATTITUDES OF HEALTHY STUDENTS TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to polling of healthy students with experience of joint studying with people with disabilities, attitude towards people with disabilities is often manifested as to regular students and relationships in student groups evaluated them as usual. For these students equal treatment, desire for friendship and cooperation with peers with disabilities (75%) and to a much lesser extent-pity and sympathy (48%) are more characteristic. This indicates a reduction of tension in this group of students in relation to disabled students as "special", "deprived" groups needing a caring attitude and assistance.

Significant differences with regard to disability observed in two different social communities demonstrate positive impact of joint studying on perception of students with disabilities by their peers and their attitudes towards disability in general.

The next set of questions presented in Table 3 and Figure 2, was dedicated to identification of the students' opinions about the preferred form of studying of students with disabilities in higher education institutions. The quiz questionnaire was drawn up in order to identify personal attitude to this issue. As a result, the quiz revealed that 65.5% of students who do not have an inclusive experience, strongly support the possibility of joint studying of persons with disabilities in the same university, while students with joint studying experiences with peers with disabilities, the answer was almost 100%. For students who do not have a joint studying experiences with peers with disabilities-31% admitted such an opportunity and 3.2% of students responded that more likely they were against it. Therefore, it can be argued that responses of this unit are characterized by a gradual decline in students' interests in joint studying in one or in different groups (but in one thread) with students with disabilities, up to categorical opposition to the latter. At this, healthy students noted two main reasons as an explanation for lack of desire to study in a group with students with disabilities:

1. The need to create special conditions for people with disabilities with reduction of academic load, etc., which can be provided in segregated conditions (special groups), etc.
2. Presence of specific personal qualities at students with disabilities that make co-education and communication difficult: self-doubt, inferiority complex, secrecy, isolation, depression, inability to self-service and other.

Noting at these reasons by students indicates presence of some social distance in informal spheres of life between healthy students and their classmates with disabilities in the student environment that does not have an integrated studying experience.

Table 3			
OPINIONS OF HEALTHY STUDENTS WITH NO INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE, ON PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF JOINT STUDYING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (%)			
	In HEI	In various groups	In one group
Strongly support	65.6	58.7	38.8
Admit such a possibility	31.1	34.1	55.5
More against	3.2	7.1	4.0
Strongly against	0	0	1.6

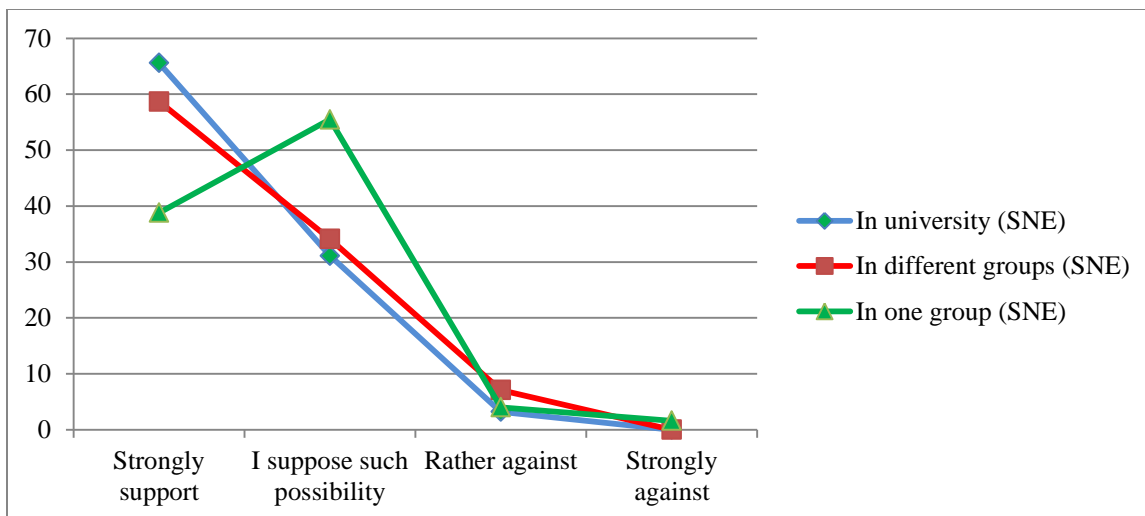


FIGURE 2
OPINIONS OF HEALTHY STUDENTS WITH NO INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE, ON PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF JOINT STUDYING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (%)

The third set of questions was devoted to the definition of the attitude of respondents toward students with various types of disabilities in the development, at the same time the extent of tolerance and the desire to interact with different categories of persons with disabilities has been revealed (Table 4).

The nature of the disability	Positive	Rather positive	Rather negative	Negative
Students with visual impairments	53	17.5	18.2	11.3
Students with hearing impairments	17.5	19	36	27.5
Students with speech impairments	42.8	20.7	32.5	4
Students with motor impairments	22.2	35	29.4	13.5
Students with intellectual disabilities	2.4	13.5	20.6	63.5
Persons with disabilities who do not have external flaws	80.2	18.2	1.6	0

Figure 3 shows the downward trend of interest in relationships with students with intellectual disabilities up to the negative attitude of joint education with them. This indicates the lowest degree of tolerance to students with intellectual disabilities. However, we should note the positive opinion of pedagogical universities students, who have experience in collaborative learning with peers with disabilities and do not have such experience, in the assessment of the

effects of the integration of disabled students in ordinary universities. Almost all students (over 70%) believe that the cooperative learning with students with disabilities will enable them to become more tolerant, learn to mutual help and increase the level of empathy.

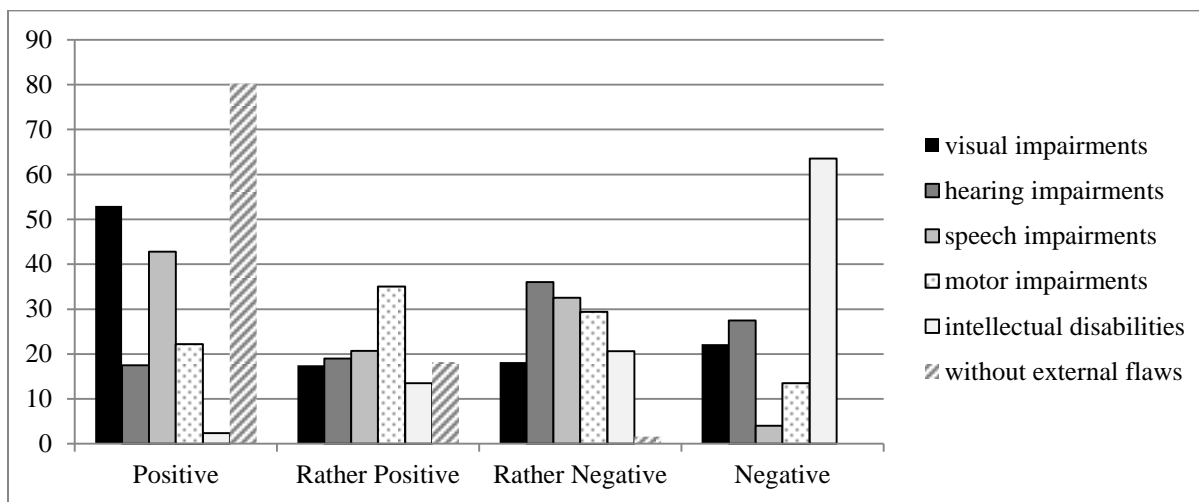


FIGURE 3
THE ATTITUDE OF HEALTHY STUDENTS TO COEDUCATION WITH STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Conducted experimental studies suggests varying degrees of tolerance at students to fellow students, depending on whether they have co-educational experience with their disabled peers or not. It was found that students, who do not have a joint educational experience with peers with disabilities, in the least degree tend to equal treatment and a desire to co-operation (37%) and much more-compassion and desire to help (63%). As a result of the processing of the questionnaire material we have not detected an impact of the degree of ethnic tolerance, academic performance and place of residence of the respondents. Among the factors that have an impact on the performance of a tolerant attitude towards people with disabilities by students we should include their level of education (curriculum) and the presence of collaborative studying experience with people with disabilities before.

The conducted experiment showed the lack of tolerant and equal treatment of students in the institute who had not previously had experience in inclusive education, collaborative education with people with disabilities, which suggests the need for a special psychological and pedagogical work to remove some of the prejudices and fears, as well as the formation of their readiness to the establishment of equal interpersonal relationships. As an aspect of formed tolerance toward disabled students by normal students, in accordance with its components we should note the following personality traits: the willingness and ability to an active position in the joint curricular and extra-curricular work with provided category of students; empathy attitude to students-people with disabilities, regardless of their individual development, tolerance, openness to all subjects included in the educational process, receptiveness to various innovations of integrated education at the institute.

Collaborative learning with students with disabilities in the conditions of normal institute undoubtedly requires a fairly high level of tolerance towards them from the all students' society, which in turn makes it necessary to organize the process of psychological-pedagogical preparation of students for integrated education. In this case, one of the objectives aimed at further development of integration processes in the sphere of higher and postgraduate education, is the formation of a positive public attitude towards education accessibility problem for persons with disabilities and tolerant attitude towards them, based on the principles of cooperation, mutual respect, comprehension and tolerance.

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