

Shaping an inclusive environment in an EFL classroom

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of inclusive education strategies in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The study included a review of documentation, pre-and post-service teachers' accounts, and surveys. Preliminary results indicate that pre-service teachers are actively improving their teaching methods by adapting their teaching materials to the diverse needs of their learners. The results highlight the importance of preparing pre-service teachers to adapt their curricula to students with special educational needs. This, in turn, facilitates more effective classroom management, planning of the learning process, and the development of creative teaching approaches.

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Xorijiy til ukitish darslarida inklyuziv muxit yarata olish

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

o'quv dasturlarini
moslashtirish,
nogironlar,
alohida ta'limga muhtoj
o'quvchilar,
inklyuziv tarzda o'qitish,
chet tili,
o'qituvchilarni qayta
tayyorlash dasturi,
ta'lim standarti.

Ushbu maqola ingliz tili chet tili (EFL) kontekstida inklyuziv ta'lim strategiyalarining ta'sirini o'rganadi. Ma'lumotlarni yig'ish hujjatlarni tahlil qilish, o'qituvchilarning hikoyalari va so'rovni o'z ichiga oldi. Dastlabki ma'lumotlar shuni ko'rsatadiki, o'qituvchilar o'quv mazmunini turli xil ehtiyojlarni qondirish uchun moslashtirib, o'qitish usullarini yaxshilaydilar. Xulosa qilib aytadigan bo'lsak, bo'lajak til o'qituvchilarini nogiron o'quvchilar uchun o'quv dasturlarini o'zgartirishga chaqirish sinfni yaxshiroq boshqarishga, o'qitishning yanada samarali dizayniga va o'qitishdagi ijodkorlikni oshirishga olib kelishi mumkin.

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Формирование инклюзивной среды на занятиях иностранного языка

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

корректировка учебной программы, инвалидность, учащиеся с особыми образовательными потребностями, инклюзивное обучение, иностранный язык, программа переподготовки учителей, образовательный стандарт.

В данной статье анализируется влияние стратегий инклюзивного образования в контексте преподавания английского языка как иностранного (EFL). Исследование включало анализ документации, рассказы преподавателей до и после начала их профессиональной деятельности, а также опросы. Предварительные результаты указывают на то, что преподаватели начального образования активно совершенствуют свои методы, адаптируя учебный материал к разнообразным потребностям учащихся. Результаты подчеркивают значимость подготовки будущих преподавателей к адаптации учебных программ для студентов с особыми образовательными потребностями. Это, в свою очередь, способствует более эффективному управлению классом, планированию учебного процесса и развитию творческих подходов в преподавании.

INTRODUCTION

Every child should have access to education, as it is "both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights". Excluding children with disabilities from education jeopardizes their future opportunities for success. Diversity is a key focus in today's world, prominently visible in classrooms worldwide, including in Croatia, where students of various abilities, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, languages, and family structures come together. [1, 35]

Inclusive education aims to address the unique needs of every child. Although the concept is not new, it demands dedicated efforts and preparedness from teachers. Inclusive education involves teachers, students, school staff, the local community, and others. However, teachers play a crucial role in fostering inclusion in schools. They implement essential changes to meet each child's individual needs and must be "well-trained" to do so. Teachers create "socially supportive learning environments" that are welcoming and supportive, enabling all students to achieve academic and social success. Such environments help students with disabilities feel accepted, safe, and respected.

Effective inclusion relies on competent teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusion. For inclusion to be successful, teachers must be prepared to teach and embrace students with disabilities. Conversely, a lack of teacher competence hinders the development of quality inclusive education. Studies indicate that Croatian teachers feel inadequately prepared to work with children with disabilities. [2, 74]

The authors of the article are professional educators specializing in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and are involved in EFL preservice and in-service education programs at Moscow City University and Ogarev Mordovia State University in Russia. They also adapt teaching materials for inclusive settings across various educational levels. Like many of their peers, the authors are concerned about the

insufficient preparation of foreign language (FL) teachers for inclusive classrooms. To address this issue, they aimed to establish standards for inclusive FL teacher training.

The authors conducted a review of existing research literature, developed a questionnaire, and analyzed survey results to identify the need for inclusive FL teaching. Their analysis focused on current levels of preservice and in-service teacher training and pinpointed areas where teachers need competencies for inclusively teaching students with special educational needs (SEN).

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

This qualitative research aimed to investigate curricular adjustments in inclusive education by exploring research problems from the perspective of the involved population. Mack et al. (2005) propose that this research methodology is suitable for understanding various cultural and individual aspects of specific groups. Through this approach, researchers can delve into the distinct characteristics, values, beliefs, and practices that define different cultures and individuals. Recognizing this diversity is essential for fostering inclusivity and promoting cross-cultural understanding. [3, 18]

According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research allows for thorough investigation in the field of educational research, facilitating in-depth exploration. Methods such as documental inquiry and surveys are used to deeply investigate educational phenomena.

Buns (2015) explains that action research examines social situations and encourages the active and cooperative involvement of participants. This type of research goes beyond traditional methods by actively involving those affected by the findings. Zapata and Rondán (2016) state that action research aims to create supportive elements that contribute to social transformation, engaging individuals in the process. By involving individuals in the research process, this methodology ensures their voices are heard, their experiences are considered, and their perspectives shape the outcomes. [4, 56]

For this article, three instruments were used. The first was documental inquiry, which involves data analysis to outline the various stages in the methodology. This process guides the understanding of the researched information (De Andrade et al., 2018). Carrillo (2020) notes that documentary research involves significant processes such as gathering, comparing, and analyzing specialized knowledge about a specific phenomenon.

The second instrument used was preservice teachers' narratives. Carrillo stated that narratives encompass significant aspects of our existence, including beliefs, actions, culture, and even thoughts. By examining these narratives, we not only gain a deeper understanding of the core issues but also explore the complexity and variations that explain why events unfold in specific ways. Additionally, Pereira Pére emphasized that data gathering involves collecting various elements, including verbal, nonverbal, and visual components, such as narratives and images.

The third and final instrument, which is perhaps one of the most commonly used, was a survey. According to Ros, surveys are considered an effective tool for describing the reality of the participants. Additionally, López-Roldán & Fachelli noted that surveys serve as valuable instruments in research, enabling us to uncover the unspoken truths of the respondents. [5, 32]

Data collection involved compiling sixty scientific articles focused on inclusive education, covering teaching practices, disabilities, and curricular adjustments. Atlas Ti

software was utilized to categorize information on the various aspects examined in the inquiry. The analysis revealed that exploring disabilities presented nuanced challenges for teachers, with strategies often targeting specific disabilities individually. The study examined 90 narratives from EFL pre-service teachers, highlighting persistent uncertainties surrounding curricular adjustments and indicating a need for further exploration in this area.

The narratives underscored the complexities and difficulties in adapting curricula to meet the diverse needs of learners in language education settings. The findings emphasized the necessity for continued research and discussion to better understand effective implementation of curricular changes that enhance students' language learning experiences.

Additionally, the investigation showed that the practical teaching experience offered through an elective at a public university was highly valued by students. This real-world teaching opportunity allowed pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge and develop practical skills, positively influencing their learning and motivation. In-service teachers also expressed support for continuing such workshops to bridge the gap between theory and practice for pre-service teachers. [6, 108]

These findings underscore the importance of ongoing research and discussions on curricular adjustments in EFL education. They also highlight the potential benefits of providing meaningful teaching experiences in authentic contexts for pre-service teachers. By addressing uncertainties about curricular adjustments and continuing to offer practical teaching opportunities, educational institutions can better prepare future language teachers and enhance the quality of language education.

The results from a semi-structured survey indicated that students greatly appreciated the inclusive education experience, noting it was their first encounter with such an approach. However, the survey also revealed uncertainties among students regarding how to further adjust the curriculum to accommodate specific disabilities and contexts. [7, 41]

Based on the initial findings of the documentary inquiry, it is evident that inclusive education is increasingly recognized as crucial. According to Lopez et al. (2021), educators play a pivotal role in addressing and accommodating the diverse needs students may present in classrooms. By embracing inclusive practices, educators can mitigate the marginalization that students often experience when treated differently. Inclusive education acknowledges that each student possesses unique needs, thereby fostering a culture of respect and breaking down social barriers in educational settings. However, despite its growing popularity, there remains a significant lack of access to quality education for individuals with disabilities.

Pawlik et al. (2023) conducted research involving autistic adolescents, highlighting that inadequate educational environment, which fail to consider their interests, diverse needs, and abilities, directly impede their educational progress and overall success. There is widespread concern about the conditions provided to students in schools, as insufficient attention and accommodations can severely limit their academic and personal development.

International standards emphasize the urgent necessity of creating inclusive opportunities for all learners. According to King-Sears (2008), this can be achieved through designing curricula and activities that accommodate different modes of

representation, expression, and engagement. The Universal Design for Learning framework, initially proposed in 1984, underscores the importance of adjusting instructional materials, methods, and assessments to ensure accessibility, engagement, and effectiveness for diverse learners. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in 1994 further reinforced the principle that all learners, regardless of physical, intellectual, or emotional differences, should be integrated into mainstream schools and provided with necessary support. [8, 27-35]

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was established in 2006 to uphold and protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms, and promoting respect for their inherent dignity (Lang et al., 2011). Built upon existing human rights principles, particularly non-discrimination, the CRPD mandates that countries must guarantee inclusive and quality education for all individuals without exception, as articulated in Article 24.

In summary, the research highlights the imperative of inclusive education and underscores the ongoing need for educators to receive adequate training and professional development to effectively meet the diverse needs of all students. [9, 42]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the experiences of prospective teachers in implementing an inclusive approach through preparation, implementation, and outcomes of curricular adjustments in a public institution with a diverse student body, including students with disabilities. Narrative analysis served as the primary method, yielding several significant findings. Firstly, existing research often segregates disabilities from student competencies, offering fragmented perspectives. The study underscored the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to inclusive education by identifying various constraints and opportunities that can be addressed through effective teaching practices.

Secondly, the study involved narratives from 90 in-service educators who highlighted the positive aspects of inclusive classrooms while acknowledging challenges such as feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Common challenges cited included inadequate resources, limited budgets, large class sizes, and insufficient support from special educators. These findings underscored the necessity for additional resources, training, and support networks to help teachers effectively address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

The third component of the study focused on the impact of surveys regarding participants' ability to adapt the curriculum to accommodate specific disabilities. While participants found the experience enjoyable, it also revealed the complexity of managing a wide range of disabilities not represented in the sample. While some participants expressed confidence in adapting the curriculum, they also expressed a need for ongoing support and guidance to enhance their expertise in this area.

In summary, this research emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to inclusive education, where curricular adjustments are prepared, adjusted, and implemented to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. It highlights the necessity for thorough training, adequate resources, and continuous support for both pre-service and in-service educators to effectively meet the educational needs of all students.

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