

ADAPTATION OF CHILDREN WITH LIMITED HEALTH ABILITIES TO THE CONDITIONS OF SCHOOLING. THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN SOCIAL EDUCATIONALISTS

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Abstract: *The problem of adaptation of children with health disabilities to the conditions of studying in Russian secondary schools is presented in this article. Also we analyze here the experience of Russian specialists in the sphere of social and pedagogical support given to such children in the process of their adaptation and integration into the community of their healthy peers. As a partial result of our analysis we define conditions, which should be created in order to increase the number of inclusive schools in Russia. We also summarize psychological and pedagogical knowledge needed for professional training in the inclusive education.*

Keywords: *adaptation, integration, socialization, children with limited abilities of health, social educational specialist, social and pedagogical accompaniment*

In any community irrespective of its stage of development (whether it may be an affluent economically advanced country or a developing nation) there are people who have some deviations in their physical, mental or social development. It means that external circumstances or the state of a person's health do not conform with certain norms which are accepted in the given community. The sphere of the "normal" always have definite limits in people's mind, and everything that goes beyond the limits is defined as abnormal and pathologic.

According to the definition of M.A. Galaguzova the norm is a certain ideal entity, an arbitrary symbol for objective reality, some overall average characteristic of the reality that does not exist in it (6, p.87).

This term is widely used in psychology, pedagogics and other sciences in which there are special indicators, parameters and characteristics of the norm. If something does not correspond to the norm, it is referred to as "deviation". According to the type of deviation people who have it are defined as abnormal, deviant, defective, retarded, handicapped, invalids.

The analysis of research papers written by psychologists and educationist who have been dealing with this problem (T. A. Vlasova, M. S. Pevzner, L. S. Vygotsky, A. R. Maler, L. Pozhar and others) shows that the term “a differently able child/a challenged person” is used alongside with the notion “abnormal” and “defective”. According to N. N. Malofeev the terms that have been used by the specialists since the XIX century (idiot, imbecile, children with Down’s syndrome, cripple, mentally defective) nowadays are viewed as incorrect because of the negative connotations these words acquire when applied to the “normal people”. In modern Russian pedagogics there is a tendency to avoid the term “abnormal children” because this is a segregative term that emphasizes physical or mental deficiency of a child placed in some closed isolated system of special education which considerably restricts his or her rights (5, p.5).

Nowadays Russian specialists in social pedagogics and psychology seek to use some other terms when speaking about “special” people. Thus the term “deviant/anomalous” is widely used in modern sources. Though in some papers we can come across the word “defective” (7, p.11-12). Foreign scientists’ investigations devoted to this problem are of great interest for us. The current investigation of L. Pozhar shows that other terms are used in different countries. For example, in France they use the notion “inadaptive” (having difficulties with adaptation), in Great Britain they use the term “children and adolescents with special needs”, in Slovakia – “children and adolescents that need special assistance”, a shorter term, “injured” is also coming to use. It seems that these terms appear more correct and precise.

The Law of Education of the Russian Federation employs the notion of “a person with limited abilities” (handicapped person). It is applied to children having physical and/or mental handicaps which impede digesting educational standards without creating special conditions for getting education. Also the notion of a “handicap” is introduced and the types of handicaps are pointed out – physical, mental, complicated and severe (2, p.12-13).

Physical handicaps include confirmed in accordance with established order temporary or permanent deficiencies in the development and/or functioning of a person’s organs, or inveterate somatic or infectious diseases. Deviations in the physical growth and development of a child can include a disease, impairment of vision, hearing impairment, impairment of locomotorium.

Mental handicaps imply confirmed in accordance with established order temporary or permanent deficiencies in the mental development of a person. Here belong speech disturbance, the disorder of emotional and volition sphere, including brain damage, and also derangement of mental development, mental retardation that create difficulties in learning. Mental deficiency can be determined by the inborn deficiencies of the nervous system or caused by a disease, trauma or some other factor.

The Federal Law of the Russian Federation “On Social Protection of Invalids” says: “An invalid is a person who has health disorders accompanied with sustainable dysfunction of the organism, determined by diseases, injury consequences or deficiencies, leading to the limitation of life activity and causing the necessity of the social protection of this person” (2, p.3).

This act treats “the limitation of life activity” as “a person’s full or partial loss of ability or possibility to take care of himself or herself, to move without outside assistance

ce, to orientate himself or herself, to communicate, to control his or her behaviour, to deal with studying and labor activity” (2, p.4).

L. M. Shchipitsyna divides children with development deviations into two categories and distinguishes the notions of “children with development problems” and “disabled children”. The second group includes only those children who are considerably limited in their life activity manifestations on account of a disease or injury (8). Alongside with that another approach is widely-spread (A. R. Maler) according to which children having bad defects belong to the category of “children with limited abilities/handicapped children” as the component part of this category (4).

Investigating the problem of children with limited abilities/handicapped children in the social and pedagogical context the researchers Y. N. Bausov, T. V. Butenko, L.N.Kosheleva and others use the above mentioned notions as synonymous. Thus, Y. N. Bausov gives the following definition: “a disabled person is a person with limited abilities but capable of creative development and social activity upon condition of creating necessary sociocultural environment” (1, p.10).

Children with limited abilities, according to L.N.Kosheleva’s definition, are the children “who lack social experience, their circle of contacts is reduced, because they are always under the patronage of the family and seldom go beyond the scope of it” (3, p.12).

Thus synonymous terms occurring in scientific literature mostly reflect the model “a child with limited abilities/handicapped child – an invalid child”, where the terms are equivalent and interchangeable. Due to this interchange one can presuppose that the majority of children who are referred to as invalids in Russia have certain abilities necessary for socially useful labour in different forms and upon definite conditions. At the same time specialists who work with such children underline their objective need for social and pedagogic adaptation.

Social policy in Russia, according to V. Yarskaya-Smirnova, is aimed at widening and absorption of social space, levelling social inequality, overcoming discrimination in the realization of one’s deprivation (9, p.12). Theoretically it is not a person that has to adjust themselves to the society, but the society itself should do its best to increase the degree of social integrating of a person with special needs. This may be facilitated by the development of inclusive education system in Russia that can appear an alternative to the special education system which was created in the XX century and is aimed at teaching children with health disabilities and some peculiarities in their development. Nowadays such children do not have to go to special educational institutions because they are able to get education of higher quality and adjust to life better in general secondary school. And it will allow to develop the tolerance and responsibility of able children.

The principle of inclusive education consists in the following: administration and teachers of ordinary schools accept children with special educational needs regardless of their social position, physical, emotional and intellectual development and create the conditions based on psychological and pedagogic techniques and oriented to the needs of such children.

Currently the problem of inclusive education development in Russia is in the focus of attention not only of parents and pedagogic associations but of the general pu-

blic as well. It is no wonder that 2009 was declared the Year of Equal Opportunities in Russia. It means the recognition of this problem occurs at the national level.

It is the parents of “special” children that insist on inclusion their kids into the ordinary children community. First of all it is connected with the following: the well-balanced system of correctional (special) education with well-developed methodology of educating children with learning difficulties provides poor social adaptation of the “special” child in the reality – such children are isolated from society. It goes without saying that children with special needs adjust to life better in general secondary schools than in specialized educational institutions. The difference in acquiring social experience is especially noticeable. As to able children, they improve their learning opportunities, develop tolerance, activity level and self-dependence. But the problems linked with organizing the process of developing and teaching “special” children in ordinary schools have not been solved yet. It is connected with the specific character of methods, unprepared human resources, lack of specialists etc.

Unfortunately nowadays there is no federal program of inclusive education development in the Russian Federation. But, in spite of this fact, pedagogical collectives of many general secondary schools are designing unique authors’ programs of such education and implementing them as experimental ones. Great experience in implementing inclusive education has been gained by the pedagogical collective of Non-governmental educational institution “General secondary ‘Pirogovskaya school’” in Moscow. The program of social and pedagogical support for children with limited abilities in the process of their adaptation to general secondary school conditions is aimed at developing communicative skills in able children environment, their successful socialization, accepting such children by their able peers, forming community’s tolerance, community’s realizing the problems of children with limited abilities, and, in accordance with it, at finding the ways of interaction of children with limited abilities with their able peers, at personality development of every child with special needs on the basis of realizing their physiological, psychological and age peculiarities. Arranging social and pedagogical support for children with limited abilities in the general educational institution, specialists of this institution

- take into consideration the specificity of each child’s deviations, trace systematically the child’s status and development dynamics;
- render assistance to children with limited abilities by means of concrete actions and events which allow them to overcome or compensate emerging problems of the students;
- arrange the work of small pedagogic council (SPC) which coordinates the actions of all specialists of the general educational institution, work out the system of their interaction in every particular case;
- maintain social and pedagogical support of the family in which there is a child with limited abilities;
- provide methodological assistance for teachers in case of appearing problems connected with the acquirement of special abilities and skills, communicative skills on the part of children with restricted health possibilities;
- promote improvement in the qualification of teachers and different specialists that work with children with limited abilities;

- work with the able environment of the children with limited abilities for creating the atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect, aimed at the development of proper pride and self-regard, the acceptance of children with limited abilities on equal grounds.

Nowadays elementary school teachers, teachers of different subjects, speech therapists, educationalists-psychologists, educationalists-defectologists, coaches in remedial gymnastics, child minders, specialists in the sphere of additional education and tutors participate in the development of inclusive education space in Russia.

As practice shows, it is inclusive schools that facilitate the adaptation and integration of children with health disabilities into the community. To increase the number of such institutions in Russia we should create the following conditions:

- financial and legal provision of the process of education that is regulated by legal documents;
- teachers and specialists prepared for the work with “special” children (the human resources of the institution). Thereby equal opportunities for getting medical, correctional and psychological support in the school must be created for all the students without any exceptions, that is usually approved by the parents of both “special” and “ordinary” children;
- materiel and technical support for creating barrierless environment (entrance ramps, elevators, specially equipped toilets, rooms for remedial gymnastics, psychomotor correction, classrooms for logopedic and correctional lessons with defectologists and psychologists, medical room, gymnasium etc.);
- adapted educational programs, making up individual syllabuses with the help of specialists, teachers and parents;
- necessary handouts and didactic material for teaching children.

One more reason because of which the development of inclusive education system is progressing slowly is the following: nowadays the preparation of human resources for working in an inclusive school is not paid much attention to. In our opinion, various subjects that foster realizing different levels of children’s readiness for education must be introduced into the system of teachers’ training. The idea of inclusive education makes special demands to the professional and personal training of specialists who have basic correctional education and of teachers with basic level of knowledge and special component of professional qualification. We treat the basic component as professional pedagogical training (subject knowledge, psychological and pedagogical, methodological knowledge, abilities and skills). The special component refers to the following psychological and pedagogical knowledge:

- realizing the concept of inclusive education, its difference from traditional forms of education;
- knowing psychological regularities and peculiarities of children’s age and personal development under the conditions of inclusive educational environment;
- knowing methods of psychological and didactic design of educational process;
- ability to implement various ways of pedagogic interaction between all parties of educational environment (with students in isolation and in group, with parents, teacher colleagues, specialists, managers).

Training courses, interdisciplinary councils, pedagogical workshops, probation periods, master-classes play an important role in the process of stereotypes' changing and hereafter in the professional position of a teacher in inclusive space. Open demonstrational events conducted by the teachers from inclusive education institutions allow to show the professional growth, to outline the further goals of personal and team activity.

Reliance on the experience of domestic correctional school allows to maintain the quality of education of children with limited abilities in an ordinary school at the appropriate level. Teachers from special schools render methodological assistance to their colleagues from general secondary schools. The cooperation of specialists makes the model of inclusive education viable and productive, because arranged interaction of specialists from institutions of different types facilitates better realization of the problems of children's deviant development.

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ADAPTACE DĚTÍ SE ZDRAVOTNÍM POSTIŽENÍM NA PODMÍNKY ŠKOLNÍHO VZDĚLÁNÍ. ZKUŠENOSTI RUSKÝCH SOCIÁLNÍCH PEDAGOGŮ

Abstrakt: V příspěvku jsou popsány problémy adaptace dětí se zdravotními obtížemi na podmínky studia na ruských středních školách. Autoři v textu také analyzují zkušenosti ruských specialistů v oblasti sociální a pedagogické podpory poskytované takovýmto dětem v procesu jejich adaptace a integrace do komunity jejich zdravých vrstevníků. Dílčím výsledkem jejich analýzy je definice podmínek, které by měly být splněny, aby v Rusku došlo ke zvýšení počtu inkluzivních škol. V příspěvku je uveden také shrnující přehled psychologických a pedagogických znalostí, které jsou zapotřebí pro profesní výcvik v inkluzivním vzdělávání.

Klíčová slova: adaptace, integrace, socializace, děti se zdravotním omezením, specialisté v oboru sociálního vzdělávání, sociální a pedagogický doprovod