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**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN RUSSIA**

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***Abstract***

The current state of the system of inclusive higher education in Russia is examined in the article. The article reveals the urgent problems of inclusive education such as: insufficient readiness of society to implement the system of inclusive education, lack of opportunities for professional self-realization of students with limited health capacities (LHC), the presence of public opinion with many "social myths", ignorance of the specifics of interaction with this category of students, lack of resources (including personnel), in the opinion of both students with and their fellow student, and experts. A comparative analysis of the system of inclusive education in Russia and in Europe was carried out: according to experts, the Russian system of inclusive education in comparison with the European is poorly developed and not fully ready for full operation. As a result of the analysis, recommendations were developed to improve the system of inclusive education: to organize an additional system of vocational training to gain knowledge in the field of training of persons with disabilities; to transform the educational process through the introduction of special programs and techniques; to improve the conditions of study at universities of students with limited health capacities by improving the equipment of universities; to improve the legal aspects of inclusive education and the system of financial support.

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**Keywords:** Students with disabilities, inclusive higher education, adaptation of students with limited health capacities, sociological and psychological aspects of inclusive education.



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## 1. Introduction

For many years, Russia has adhered to the traditional system of education, in which children with disabilities studied in special schools. But since 2012 the introduction of an inclusive education system has begun, which is still in its infancy. These changes correspond to the global educational trends, one of which is a competent policy in the field of education of persons with disabilities, namely the creation of the necessary conditions to meet their educational needs. As a rule, people with disabilities have internal (psychological) and external (architectural) barriers (Theoharis, 2007). It is necessary to create conducive conditions to the integration of persons with disabilities into society to remove these barriers. Thus, there is a need to change the attitude of society towards persons with disabilities, which continues to create barriers and discriminate against persons with disabilities because of stereotypes. From this point of view, disabled people are not victims, not sick, but full citizens with unique life experience and needs. (Leont'yev, Aleksandrova, & Lebedeva, 2011)

Today, the "sparing" model of enrollment, competition and selection of university entrant of "special" type is working in the universities. The specificity of the received specialties is well-defined by medical diagnoses. The main task of the higher school is to make it more "sensitive" in relation to students with disabilities, to make sure that students are free to choose an interesting profession for themselves, to ensure equality of all participants in the educational process. Handicapped person and persons with limited health capacities (LHC) have special educational needs, that is a special range of educational and adaptation tools and conditions that people in this category need, and that they need to implement the right to education, as well as the right to integration in the educational space of the organization engaged in educational activities (McGuckin, Shevlin, Bell, & Devecchi, 2013).

## 2. Problem Statement

There has been an active discussion of the term "student with special educational needs" during the last twenty years. Authors of this term believe that the essence of this concept is expressed in the traditional understanding for the domestic approach of the student with developmental disorders as a person in need of alternative ways to achieve certain tasks of cultural development, which are achieved by the methods of training rooted in culture and methods of mass education accepted in society under normal conditions (Martynova & Romanenkova, 2013).

Special educational needs of the student are expressed in the following aspects:

- Time of commencement of education;
- Content of education;
- Usage of specific teaching methods and tools (Timoshina & Sergeeva, 2013);
- Organization of training, making possible the individualization of the student;
- Duration of education;
- Coordinated participation of qualified specialists of different profiles in education;
- Inclusion of the student's parents in the process of adaptation by means of education (Petz & Miesenberger, 2012).

Let's consider the special educational needs of students with LHC as part of higher education.

The question of the time of the beginning of education is relevant from the point of view of readiness of the entrant with LHC to continuation of training on programs of the higher education. In particular, entrant with disabilities shall have the choice to go to higher educational institution or to college to qualify for a particular profession at the end of General education. Also, the entrant with LHC has the right to choose: to continue his studies at the University immediately after school or relax and prepare well for further training (Yanitskiy, 1998).

Students with LHC have the opportunity to choose and study additional adaptive subjects at the University from the point of view of the content of education. These subjects are not included in the training program of other students without any special features in development. Adaptation courses are often implemented in universities in the form of electives, which students with LHC can attend at their discretion and if necessary (Hunt & MacDoanld, 2013).

The organization of training at the University of students with LHC allows to adapt educational programs for the special needs of students (for example, the opportunity to postpone the session, the possibility of granting academic leave for health reasons, special opportunities for the learning of different types of practices, etc.) (Oplatka & Arar, 2015). Most Russian universities, which have a contingent of students with disabilities, use special techniques and teaching methods.

The specifics of training do not provide for the possibility of supporting the learning process of persons with disabilities by psychologists, defectologists and other specialists in modern Russian universities. However, it is possible to have an expert advice on the basis of services of psychological and pedagogical support of students. Parents of students with disabilities are actively involved in the educational process at previous levels of education. Training at the University, as a rule, does not provide the active involvement and support of the parents for the student with LHC.

In that regard in social terms the matriculation of an entrant with LHC to an educational institution of higher education is a significant level of achievement for the student, his family and the immediate social environment. This fact indicates that the compensation of existing deviations is quite favourable, which allows you to continue your education at a higher level (Verdugo, Jenaro, & Campo, 2010). The purpose of the educational institution of higher education for training students with LHC is not only to form the necessary competence, knowledge and skills in a particular professional field, but also to help overcome difficulties in the course of adaptation to the educational process (Buchner et al., 2014).

### **3. Research Questions**

The implementation of the system of inclusive education, including higher inclusive education, requires the solution of at least the following tasks:

- analysis of the psychological readiness of society for inclusive education, identification of relevant problems and development of ways to solve them;
- analysis of social problems associated with the implementation of inclusive education and development of ways to solve them;
- analysis of the degree of competence of the pedagogical community for working with this category of students and development of proposals to improve the degree of competence.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Taking into account the identified problems for the implementation of an inclusive higher education system, the objectives of this study are:

- diagnosis of the problems in the implementation of inclusive education;
- development of recommendations for the solution the identified problems.

## **5. Research Methods**

### **5.1. Diagnosis of the problems in the implementation of inclusive education**

Diagnosis of the problems in the implementation of inclusive education consisted of two stages:

1. opinion analysis of students with LHC and healthy students with experience in inclusive education;
2. survey of experts.

#### **5.1.1. Survey of students with experience of inclusive education (and students with disabilities, conditionally healthy students)**

First of all, it should be noted that we are faced with unwillingness of students with LHC to answer the questionnaire due to self-doubt and poor experience of communicating with strangers in the process of interviewing, due to the fact that at the previous stage of education (schooling) they were in special (correctional) schools and did not have the need (and sometimes the opportunity) to communicate with healthy coevals (Crumbaugh & Maholick,1964).

Secondly, according to the survey it was found that students did not consider inclusive education to be necessary and effective, suggesting that the best option would be to maintain separate education. Respondents justify their opinion by the fact that students with LHC have to adapt to conditions that do not meet the necessary requirements for the training of such students (for example, inadequate equipment of universities with the necessary devices). In addition, not all students with disabilities can receive full educational information, as teachers do not adhere to special programs for teaching people with disabilities. For example, one of the students said that a deaf-mute student is studying in his group, they are studying in the third year, and any additional features have never been used for three years in the classroom. The specifics of the nosology of a student with LHC haven't been taken into account.

#### **5.1.2. Expert survey**

The representatives of the resource center of Bauman Moscow state technical University as well as representatives of the resource center of Balashikha (teachers-defectologists) were the experts in our study. The experts noted the unreadiness of today's education system to full-scale implementation of an inclusive education system ("There is no problem of barrier-free environment and the need for modelling of special conditions for education of persons with special needs and disabilities in schools and universities in many countries overseas for a long time. The system of higher education has a balanced basis for many years, built on established practices, and integrated into national public policy in the countries of Western Europe and the United States").

According to experts, the main obstacle to the implementation of inclusive education in Russia today is the local rather than systemic nature of the introduction of inclusive education. Experts believe that it is necessary to introduce inclusive education gradually, while maintaining an alternative – correctional education, including due to the lack of specialized professionals ("No, not ready, but this is not a one-day process – the education system is being rebuilt slowly. It is necessary to introduce, only gradually and preserving alternative-correctional education", "the education System is not ready for full-scale implementation, as a small number of teachers have a specialty related to the LHC").

However, the experts do not doubt the need for the implementation of an inclusive education system, because as a result those with disabilities have the opportunity to better adapt to the society, including, from the point of view of further professional development. Other participants of the educational process develop the ability to tolerance for differences.

Experts assessed the Russian system of inclusive education in comparison with Europe and the United States, where the system is "developed and is in a more productive state." According to experts, the reason is that the European system is less controversial, it is "softer", and in general it is more developed, as this issue have been begun to deal much earlier in Europe than in Russia. Experts noted a number of factors that affect the efficiency of the inclusive higher education system:

- Consideration of individual and psychophysiological features of students with LHC and disabilities of various nosologies
- Correlation of the content, methods, forms of education with age, individual capabilities of persons with LHC and disabilities
- Participation in the support of students with LHC and disabilities of specialists (e.g. Tutors) included in the staff of the University
- Psychological readiness of all participants of the educational process for inclusion.

There are some problems identified by experts as hindering the development of inclusive education:

- Lack of accessible environment in the society (including psychologically accessible)
- Dysfunctions of social institutions in Russian society
- Lack (insufficiency) of opportunities for professional self-realization
- The current destruction of the correctional education system ("there should always be an alternative. Very talented students often combined forms in the process of school education: in primary school – correctional school, then the general ... from Moscow correctional schools always came strong students»
- Lack of public opinion (many "social myths" about people with LHC and disability)
- The specific identity of persons with LHC (for example, the syndrome of "learned helplessness»)
- Unpreparedness of teachers and other participants of the educational process to interact with students with LHC, including the students themselves.

## 5.2. Recommendations

As mentioned above, experts note the need for a systematic approach to the implementation and development of inclusive education in Russia and offer the following recommendations:

- Development of legal and financial mechanisms to ensure inclusion
- Professional retraining of teachers to work in conditions of inclusion
- Use of foreign experience
- Changing the attitude of society to inclusion from the standpoint of humanism and tolerance-recognition of equal value for the society of all its members
- Increasing the degree of participation of all students at all stages of the educational process
- Overcoming the problems of the imperfection of the environment

There is a need for a true psychological approach to the problem based on the understanding of disability in terms of human health and well-being that have arisen as part of positive psychology in modern inclusive pedagogy (Alexandrova, Lebedeva, & Bobozhey, 2014). So, M. Seligman believes that specialists should deal with the strengths of the individual, which include the ability of the person to be an active subject of his own life, and promote the development of these positive qualities, which are tools for maintaining health and ensuring human well-being, instead of focusing on existing developmental disorders, which in itself has little impact on the prevention of various disorders and does not contribute to the improvement of health (cited in Kosikova, 2009). In other words, it is necessary to create conditions, provide opportunities for implementation, support the individual in his development and then each person is able to achieve mastery and become effective.

## 6. Findings

The study allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The existing system of inclusive education in Russia needs to be improved.
2. The main barriers to the implementation of inclusive education are:
  - Lack of legal development
  - Low level of tolerance of the society to the education of persons with LHC in the conditions of inclusion
  - Insufficient level of professional training of participants in the educational process (primarily teachers)
3. The activities of universities should be intensified in the following areas:
  - Consideration of individual and psychophysiological features of students with LHC and disabilities of various nosologies
  - Correlation of the content, methods, forms of education with age, individual capabilities of persons with LHC and disabilities
  - Participation in the support of students with LHC and disabilities of specialists (e.g. tutors) included in the staff of the university
  - Psychological readiness of all participants of the educational process for inclusion.

## 7. Conclusion

One of the most important socio-cultural human rights is the right to education. Education is the sphere of life, which greatly affects the development of a person, his formation in society and further self-realization, including professional (Smyth et al., 2014). That is why it is necessary to make it accessible to all people. However, there are groups of students whose educational needs are not just individual, but also require a certain approach and have special features. Effective implementation of the system of inclusive education will solve a number of urgent problems:

- Adaptation of persons with LHC and disabilities in society
- Avoiding discrimination against persons with LHC and disabilities
- Formation of a unified educational environment.

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