Timohina T.V., Nelepko K.S., Fandeeva D.A.
Development of inclusive education in Russia

Orel State University named after I.S.Turgenev
(Russia, Orel)

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Abstract

The article deals with various aspects of inclusive education in Russia. It specifies handicapped children (children with special adaptive abilities), displays progressive and regressive trends, factors and tendencies successfully implemented in professional training and teaching handicapped children. The conclusion concerns significant problems and positive trends with regard to the main aspects of work with handicapped children.

Key words: Russia, inclusion, education, handicapped children, children with special adaptive abilities, higher educational institution, professional training.

The global trends of growing number of children with special adaptive abilities (disabled children) dictate the need to create beneficial environment for their accomplishment in the society. Fundamental statistical investigations indicate that there is a number of difficulties and problems associated with education and integration of that type of children. There are successful educational practices for disabled children all over the world and locally. Inclusive education is being widely applied for teaching disabled children in the same group of children with normal abilities. Especially noteworthy is the experience of inclusive education in the leading European and American countries and Israel as it demonstrates the prospects for creating beneficial conditions for that type of children.

Handicapped children refer to a special category of children whose health and development prevent them from self care, independent moving, orientation, communication, behaviour control, learning, work, i.e. from being adapted in the society and socialised unless special environment is created. Those are children under 18 years old with various deviations of psychic, physical or social nature contributing to their general development disorder and preventing them from their full integration into the society. This term usually implies children with hearing or visual or speech disorder, locomotor apparatus disorder, with mental deficiency, mental retardation, behaviour and communication disorder, complex physical development disorder, and multiple disabilities (blind deaf-mute, deaf or mute children with mental deficiency).

According to the statistics, 600 thousand handicapped children received social pensions in 2015, the number having showed a steady growth since 2009. About 211 children out of 10000 have health limitations (as of December, 31, 2014).

Over the time of historical development such children did not go to school, then received education in special institutions. There were trends for theoretical and practical development of training in higher educational institutions for professionals to work with disabled children. “Special” children need professionals specially trained within the system of higher education in Russia amidst the changes associated with transferring from traditional systems to new educational opportunities aimed at humanisation, free development, self-realisation and creative self-determination.

The development of the Russian state, economy, politics, society and culture, educational theory and practice creates prerequisites for inclusive education. Integrated and inclusive education for children with somatic disorders are gaining ground in Russia. The formation of socially oriented, pragmatic, independent personality capable to develop and cooperate with others regardless of age, sex, nationality, religion, diseases has become the key note of inclusion in Russia.

The analysis of scientific and educational literature and personal experience with regard to inclusive education has made it possible to identify an expansion trend with regard to the objects of inclusive education. Among the objects of inclusion there may be children with various physical, mental and social disorders – language barrier, particular ethnic group or religion, chronic diseases, health problems, physical disabilities, etc.

In their investigations, S.V.Alehin, N.S.Groznaya, I.V.Zadorin, Yu.V.Melnik, N.N.Malofeev, S.I.Sabelnikov and others have elaborated on the historical aspect of inclusive education in Russia and abroad.

Initially, “the inclusion” implied reforming and rearrangement of school rooms based on the needs of all children. Later it implied personnel training and awareness of the specifics related to various categories of “special” children.

According to L.I.Lebedeva and E.V.Ivanova, “the key task of higher education (university) is to mould a creative personality of a specialist (a university graduate) – self-developing, self-educating and innovative.” One of the innovations now is inclusive-oriented education.

A theory of genesis of high psychological functions developed by L.S.Vygotski is the psychological basis for the inclusion as part of the educational system in Russia. According to I.V.Zhulanova, “... ultimately important role of the people’s interaction that gives rise to the conditions for learning a new cultural form – the interaction when applied to the early ontogenesis is called an interform and is the basis of interiorisation.

The monitoring of educational institutions in Russia demonstrates that the inclusive education is based on the principle of several categories of children staying in the same room (nursery group, school classroom, university lecture room, further educational institution). Disabled children stay there full day or part time doing their individual plan under supervision of a trained teacher.

For most Russian educational institutions the inclusion implies orientation to the training, upbringing and development of all students based on their personal traits, i.e.:

- age, physiology, psychology, mental ability;
- special educational needs, orientation to various levels of complexity of the programme material for everyone involved in the educational process;
- identification of subgroups of children based on various levels of knowledge and capabilities;
- grouping of children based on their performance, capabilities, professional direction;
- identification of the tutors for disabled children to be selected from among healthy children of the inclusive group and adults involved.

Analysing the inclusive education at school A.Ya.Chigrina identifies the following basic points: 1) equality of the students at school regardless of their origin, language, school, health; 2) all the students have equal access to the teaching process throughout the working day; 3) all the students have equal opportunities to set up and develop social contacts; 4) the training of all students is thoroughly planned and performed in the most effective way; 5) the teachers and all the school employees involved in the teaching process know the inclusive training process strategies and technologies; 6) the teaching programme and the training methods are based on the needs of every student; 7) the families take an active part in the school life; 8) most of the school staff share the values of the inclusion, are positive about it and understand their functions.

Being socially governed, the inclusion in Russia started to develop as a professional trend at the beginning of the second decade of the XXI century focused on the personnel needs of special institutions and implemented in various conditions based on the customers’ religion, ethics, culture, language, social status, family and life style though the interaction with a given person and family. The professional level of teaching handicapped children

could be compatible with the world standards only through national and international interface with due regard of the needs of social institutions and that of the children themselves and the creative initiative of the university staff. During the last decade the research and practice have been centred round the professional qualification of the university graduates. Scientists have been actively discussing the training of experts for inclusive environment.

One of the key points determining the development of the inclusion in Russia and the quality of the professional training for working with handicapped children is the motivation to work with various categories of children. The hierarchy of the future expert's needs should include social motivation based on compassion and desire to help. According to the survey results, the future expert's motives to acquire new professional knowledge, skills and techniques for working with handicapped children are primarily those of social nature, i.e. being helpful to the society, ensuring equal rights and opportunities.

The public regulation of education also contributes to the large scale application of the inclusive education in Russia. In this respect the aspects related to the professional training, the setting up of adaptive environment at the university, the trainer's competency in the inclusion, the development of special practices for training the experts to work with handicapped children have been integrated in the legal content on the federal level and locally. The rating and control of the academic activities, the incentive system transparency which enables the tracking of the performance of various training programmes, the training incentive system, the monitoring of the university training process and performance contribute to the total progress of the inclusion.

The driving component of the inclusion in the educational environment is the future experts' zeal to master theory and practice. This depends to a great extent on the trainer who is well familiar with the specifics of the inclusion and able to have the future expert involved and interested.

Being critical for the professional training for the work with handicapped children, the quality of theoretical training depends on the trainer's qualification and the focus of the subjects on the inclusive environment, on the application of the existing training materials, and the practice.

The availability of positive training experience with handicapped children will play a great role for future teachers. Having a practical data base from a good number of various educational institutions for handicapped children will help the training process become practice-oriented. The opportunity to put a theory into practice will improve the future expert's awareness of the training process.

An educational factor affecting the existing system of professional training in RF is the customisation of practice approached in two ways. Firstly, it is the most careful attention to the preferences and the personality of the future educational expert. Secondly, it is the commitment to the specific work with a handicapped child.

A guideline contributing to the development of the inclusive education in Russia and a feasible educational factor of the professional training of experts for the work with handicapped children is the development of the basic components of the university education. This development ensures special subjects to be part of the training programme for future experts with the information on corrective education, social theory of education, special psychology, and speech correction.

Humanisation of the educational system could be highlighted as one of the global tendencies of the inclusion within the system of professional training of experts for the work with handicapped children. This tendency has found its way into the theory and methods with focused on the personal development as a prerequisite of the social progress. Basically it carries the idea of eliminating social inequality, fostering respect and tolerance. The recognition of a personality's unique nature and value in the professional training of experts for the work with handicapped children comes about in two ways. On the one hand, through being humane to the future experts and attentive to their unique nature in the process of

education. On the other hand, through creating humane attitude to handicapped children, contributing to the exercising of their rights, freedoms, social protection on the part of the future expert at the university using various scientific and educational media.

Humanisation of education in Russia today is closely linked with the professional training reorganisation with due account for humanistic and personal orientation. As a global tendency Reorganisation is primarily observed in the structure of education. The professional training continuity is visible on various levels and structures.

Training differentiation in terms of experts working with handicapped children spread in Europe, then in Russia at the close of XIX and the early XX centuries. The differentiation is aimed at the best consideration of the students' personal and professional features allowing to divide the future experts by profiles and flows. At the university the differentiation allows to use various forms and methods. The enhancement of theoretical training is linked with scientific and practical development, wide application of information technologies on a global level. Today the professional training of experts for the work with handicapped children is performed in conjunction with medical, psychological and educational subjects. The integration of education and research is one of the global tendencies observed in Russia in the evolution of the professional training of experts for the work with handicapped children. The integration of the university education serves primarily to provide staff assistance for the scientific research today. The involvement of students in the research will ensure better quality of the university education.

The university training in RF is based on the competency approach. This approach ensures interdisciplinary and multidimensional knowledge. The integration in education ensures resolution of complex problems related to the professional training for the work with handicapped children through the synthesis of empiric and theoretical methods.

The inclusive education today has great potential for development in Russia that makes it possible to involve children with special educational needs in easy types of professional, physical, aesthetic, cultural, and public activities, facilitating social relations and cooperation between healthy and handicapped children. However, there is a number of reasons why the inclusive education has not been integrated with the system of educational institutions in Russia so far.

Primarily the reasons are related to management:

- lack of adequate management process for proper social adaptation within educational environment;
- unwillingness of school administrations to include disabled children in the groups of normal children;
- lack of flexible system of variable education in Russia.
- The following reasons are related to training:
- insufficient provision of the social adaptation process with inclusive tools;
- poor level of qualification of the teaching staff at higher educational institutions, schools, pre-school and supplementary educational institutions.
- The following reasons are related to psychology:
- unwillingness of other children from the inclusive school and their parents to consider the problems, needs and desires of disabled children;
- the society's misunderstanding, unpreparedness for integration of disabled children.

There are also social and economic reasons:

- families with a handicapped child has not enough money to educate their child properly;
- schools have no funds to re-equip their rooms or re-train their personnel to work with disabled children.

The regressive factors affecting the university training of experts for the work with handicapped children are distrust of the professors and students to the inclusion in the educational process, criticism of the inclusion as an educational opportunity, authoritarian character of the university management in the form of enhanced monitoring and administrative decision taking, deficit of information, materials and resources.

It should be noted that the basics of social adaptation of disabled children to the inclusive school's environment are region-specific in terms of social and economic development of the region, cultural traditions of the area, psychological preparedness of the people to welcome a "special" child, specifics of the schools, professional skills of the teachers qualified for inclusive schools, purpose-oriented work of mass media to explain to the people of the region the benefits of inclusive education both for the children with special educational needs and children with normal development, availability and activities of public organisations.

Thus, the system of inclusive education in Russia has just started out. Both the teachers and the parents of disabled children have significant problems. Nevertheless, there are positive trends for various activities with disabled children.

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Ying Li , Suning Tang, Yanfeng Yue, Ting Zhang, Hong Ma
Archetype of the Heroes from Norse Myths in Harry Potter Series

School of International Education, University of Science and Technology
(China, Liaoning, Anshan)

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Abstract

The "Harry Potter" series have displayed the epic myth of human childhood and are considered a gem of children's literature of the world. A lot of mythical elements attract the attention of scholars in the process of research. This paper attempts to apply Frye's theories to analyze the archetypes of heroes from Norse myths in this series and find the connections between Harry Potter and the heroes in Norse myths. By analyzing hero's growth, hero's adventures and the similarities and differences between Harry Potter and the traditional Heroes I illuminate the influence of hero images in Norse myths on the creation of Harry Potter.

Key words: Harry Potter; Heroes; Norse myths; Archetypal criticism