Inclusive Education in Russian and German Kindergartens  
(Comparative Analysis Yakutsk-Hamburg)

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Abstract: The article gives brief summary of author’s probation period in Hamburg (Germany) during which he investigated inclusive education for people with special educational needs. Targeted group subject to research included children with sight problems who go to kindergartens both in Germany and Yakutia for many decades. The author uses not only scientific materials of German and Russian scientists in pedagogics but his empirical observations which were made by him during research probation period while visiting kindergartens. While visiting Hamburg kindergartens the author noticed poor educational activity in kindergartens, mainly their work was concentrated on upbringing and supervision functions. Today proper choice of inclusive kindergarten is obligatory condition of successful socialization of children with health problems. Inclusion of a child into society must take place in the first educational institution-kindergarten. In this case children will go to school and enter the university as quite prepared young men and universities will not spend their resources for their adaptation as it occurs today in some Russian universities.

Key words: Inclusive education  •  People with special educational needs  •  Braille’s system  •  Adaptive computer technologies  •  Braille’s line  •  Programs intended for type enlargement  •  Children with sight problems  •  Continuous system of inclusive education

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is innovative type of education intended for people with special educational needs. It is a form of education activity organization, when all students regardless of their individual abilities and potentialities and belonging to some social and cultural minorities can realize their right for getting high-quality education. In the same time inclusive model of education is oriented not only to specific knowledge resource but is aimed for maximal social inclusion of every special child into social life.

Our tasks in this area of activity were clearly formulated by Dmitry Medvedev in April 7, 2009 when he was making a speech at the Presidential Commission on problems of disabled people. Dmitry Medvedev said the following: “We are just obliged to form normal education system for disabled people in order to allow children to study among their age-mates in ordinary schools and eliminate their isolation from society” [1].

Every region, every educational institution has its own specific character. In some cases inclusive practice is being implemented for long time, in other cases the process is rather painful. Teachers of educational institutions which open their doors for special children must have the opportunity to obtain necessary knowledge, improve their qualification before they start performing their duties. They also need methodological literature of new generation.

In order not to restrict the inclusive education process to one more campaign national and foreign best practices must be analyzed thoroughly and those of them which are the most adequate to conditions of some region, specific educational institution practices must be chosen.

Current stage of development of civil society demands that new education model must be formed in Russian educational system-inclusive education of children with special educational needs. We propose to introduce in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) continuous
system of inclusive education for people with sight problems, where adaptive computer technologies must be used, which must include all stages of education (kindergarten, school, college, university).

Talking about inclusive education is a new fashion of today but unfortunately these are only words, we have not done something real yet. It is very disappointing because the first steps in development of inclusive education were made in the end of 50s in our great country and in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

At that distant times there were no specialized kindergartens for children with sight problems, that is why many of disabled children were brought up in ordinary kindergartens side by side with healthy children. It was my situation too: in the end of 50s I went to kindergarten '6 in Yakutsk, at that time I had only 2-4% of sight.

On the 1st of June, 1978 in Yakutsk a kindergarten '1 11 (Snowdrop) was organized in which side by side with ordinary healthy children blind children were also brought up. In 2006 kindergarten Snowdrop got the status of child development center and in November of 2011 it became city municipal experimental platform intended for implementation of continuous system of inclusive education for children with special educational needs. In kindergarten Snowdrop there were 306 children, 140 of which were children with sight problems [2]. Similar kindergartens for children with all nosologies were numerous in our country.

In Yakutsk there is also kindergarten Small star ('1) where side by side with healthy children the children with ISP are brought up. In the city of Nerungry there are also many kindergartens which work with children with special educational needs, for example, kindergarten Ryabinushka works with children who have hearing problems.

NEFU pays special attention to formation of inclusive education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) with the purpose of carrying out of fundamental and applied researches in the sphere of inclusive education in the area of pre-school, school and higher professional education.

Activity of NEFU divisions is intended for theoretic-methodological and scientific-methodological support of inclusive education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), higher qualification and post-graduate professional education of the specialists of educational institutions which implement inclusive education.

Permanent Commission was organized at NEFU intended for work with students with special educational needs, which includes many pro-rectors and the Head of NEFU Commission is pro-rector on pedagogical education M.P. Fedorov. This Commission holds meetings on a quarterly basis and operates in accordance with adopted events plan.

In May 31, 2010 in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) round table (panel discussion) was organized for the first time and it was devoted to the problems and perspectives of inclusive education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Round table was organized by the Committee on science, culture and education and mass media of the State Council (Il toomen). At this round table we gave our recommendations on development of inclusive education in the Republic of Sakha.

In accordance with the order of the Minister of education and science of the Russian Federation A.A. Fursenko of December 30, 2010 ¹ 2211 NEFU was included into the list of basic educational institutions of higher professional education of the Russian Federation which provide conditions for studying of disabled persons.

2012 can be called revolutionary year in Russia in terms of regulatory and law acts intended for implementation of continuous system of inclusive education for people with special educational needs (SEN) which, of course, facilitated implementation of inclusive education into all universities of the Russian Federation.

On the 3rd of May, 2012 Dmitry Medvedev being at that moment the President of Russia signed Federal Law about ratification of international Convention and Russia became 111st country which ratified international UN Convention about the disabled persons' rights. Article 24: Education:

UN General Assembly International Convention dated December, 13 2006 ¹61/106 [3] about the rights of disabled persons:

**Article 24. Education:** States participating in the Convention recognize the right of disabled persons to education In order to implement this right without any discrimination and on the base of equal opportunities the participating states provide inclusive education on all levels and on lifelong basis.


Chapter 1 General Provisions

**Article 2 Main Notions Used in the Present Federal Law:**
Student with restricted health abilities is a physical person which has faults in physical and (or) psychological development which are confirmed by psychological-medical-pedagogical commission which hinder education without special conditions; Inclusive education is provision of equal access to education for all students with due regard to diversity of special educational needs and individual abilities.

Chapter 11. Particularities of Implementation of Some Education Programs and Getting Education by Some Separate Categories of Students: Article 79 Organization of education for students with restricted health abilities.

On the 24th of August, 2012 at extended meeting of the Ministry of education of the Republic of Sakha the Concept of inclusive education of the Republic of Sakha proposed by P. Egorov was approved with a single heart [5].

The aim and tasks of the inclusive education concept

The aim of the concept is qualitative and planned improvement of the education system and social rehabilitation of children with SEN by implementation of inclusive education intended for valuable development and self-realization of children with SEN.

Tasks:

- Improvement of regulatory, research and methodological, finance and economic support oriented to implementation of inclusive form of education;
- Development of staff, methodological, didactical support of educational institutions participating in inclusion process;
- Improvement of training and re-training of teachers, medical and social specialists who implement inclusive education;
- Engagement of SEN children's parents into education rehabilitation process in order to increase its effectiveness;
- Formation of socio-psychological public culture for development of inclusive processes;
- Introduction of innovative-education technologies in the context of inclusive approach and the models of special education services for SEN children;
- Implementation of theoretical model of continuous system of inclusive education into all educational institutions of the Republic of Sakha (pre-school educational institutions, general education institutions, technical and professional training schools and university) with due regard to social needs.

In Germany after the education reform in 70s kindergartens must perform not only up-bringing but educational functions as well. Demand for places in kindergartens was increasing because of demographical explosion and necessity to earn one's living which made the parents bring their children to kindergartens.

Sphere of kindergarten education activity in every federal land of Germany is regulated in accordance with land and regulatory acts, for example, in accordance with "Hamburg educational recommendations" in 7 areas:

- Body, motion and health;
- Social and cultural environment;
- Communications: languages, written culture and mass media;
- Arts;
- Music;
- Mathematics;
- Nature-environment-machinery; [6].

These 7 areas are taken into account in every day work by the kindergarten teachers and now upbringing work is concentrated on them, not only on formation of social competence as it was in 70s.

Children need other children to develop language and social competence—that is why this postulate has become accepted truth because children learn while playing games. Thus, a play around a child must be initiated by the children themselves, without interference from adults' side.

It is worth mentioning that language development and personality development can occur in a game with other children without adults, because in conflict situations children learn to talk and articulate their own wishes, control their actions.

"All children, young men and adults—both healthy and with some health problems must play, learn and live together from the very beginning. From public nursery age to the graduation from secondary school they must work and live side by side” [7].

Making this statement Ulrich Heimlich insists on introduction of inclusion into all periods of human life. That is why the first thoughts about inclusion must be
formed in the early childhood, only then a man will have appropriate mind-set biased towards the disabled people. In this case modern society will be able to understand inclusion and accept these people.

Most parents who have disabled children after graduation from kindergarten did not want their children to study at special schools any more and demanded from the municipal authorities to organize school inclusive education for their children. This resulted in formation in 1975 of inclusive primary schools, such as Fläming and Uckermark and preliminary school in Berlin [8].

15 years ago in Germany about 20000 children with health problems went to inclusive kindergartens and about 27 000 children with health problems went to special institutions which correspond to the integration coefficient of 43%. All over Germany ratio changed from 80% in Bremen and Gessen to only 14% in Bavaria [9].

Klaus Klemm’s statistical analysis of implementation of inclusive education in Germany showed the following:

in 2011 integration coefficient for children with health problems was 67,1% within the Federation. But in such lands as Bavaria, Low Saxonia and Baden-Wurtemberg the situation was the most unhappy, only 40% of disabled children are brought up and educated in inclusive institutions.

On the contrary, Berlin is the leader with 99,2%, then comes Brandenburg (95,9%) and Saxonia-Angalt (92,5%). Hamburg is on the 4th place with 91,2% [10].

“The most entertaining toy for a child is another child”: This phrase of Bernard Show characterizes upbringing function of a game very well. While being brought up in the kindergarten a child obtains through the game one of the most important evolutionary conditions of his development.

During my visiting kindergartens in Hamburg I noticed poor education activity in there, in fact they performed only upbringing and supervision functions. The focus is on a game. When I asked the pre-school teacher of the senior group about readiness for school of 6 year old blind boy she answered that he was taught by a specialist from special school once a week.

Though inclusive education is implemented in Germany many years I did not notice big improvements regarding people with sight problems.

For example, great Lui Braille’s system is not taught in Germany on proper level as in many European countries. They say that because of new information technologies which allow to use speech synthesizers this system is out-of-date.

I call these technologies adaptive technologies and I try to implement them in Russian Federation by all means; but in Hamburg they are not actively used by schoolchildren and students with sight problems in education process.

It must be mentioned that though many scientific articles are full with examples of best practices which are common thing in the West, in reality it is not always so.

Our Russian pre-school, school and university education, in spite of the fact of radical decrease which took place during the last 2 decades is still not inferior and in some aspects is superior to foreign education. And we must increase the level of Russian education applying modern innovative technologies.

Today choice of inclusive kindergarten is obligatory condition for successful socialization of children with health problems. Inclusion of disabled child into society must take place in the first stage-kindergarten. If it will be in this way the children will go to school and enter the university as quite prepared young men and universities will not spend their resources for their adaptation as it occurs today in some Russian universities.

Thus, all children must be brought up together. But this demands a lot of financial contributions and appropriate staff in order to create more inclusive kindergartens and schools.

Nevertheless, it can happen only then when the rights of disabled children are reinforced by proper state policy and tolerant attitude of the modern society to these children.

Side by side with all mentioned above we need modern pedagogical programs and systematic increase in qualification of kindergartens’ and schools’ employees. Success in upbringing of all children can also be achieved by love of child minders and teachers to their profession and a child.

REFERENCES

3. UN International Convention on Disabled persons’ rights.
4. RF federal law about education.
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