

On organization of the inclusive educational environment in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation

Aliya Tahirzyanovna Fajzrahmanova

Kazan Federal University, Mezhlauka Street, 1, Kazan, 420008, Russia

Abstract. The need to create the inclusive educational environment is considered, in particular, we discuss the relevance of higher professional education for individuals with disabilities. Organization of accessible and high-quality higher education for individuals with special educational needs is a necessary condition for successful socialization of this category of people. Today development of inclusion in education is one of the priority areas of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of education. The issues of legal regulation of inclusive education in the Russian Federation are investigated. The historical aspect of higher education for individuals with disabilities has been discussed. Some statistical data on the number of students with disabilities studying in Russian universities has been given. Difficulties standing in the way to inclusion in higher educational institutions are discussed. The architectural, psychological and pedagogical and cognitive barriers have been reviewed overcoming of which will allow to create the optimum conditions for implementation of inclusive education in a higher school.

[Fajzrahmanova A.T. **On organization of the inclusive educational environment in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(11s):59-62] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 14

Keywords: inclusive education, higher education institution (HEI), individuals with disabilities (DA), barriers in education, individuals with special educational needs (SEN), barrier-free educational environment

Introduction

Over the past few years due to actualization of the issue of providing the physically handicapped with equal possibilities in the process of their integration into society particular attention has been paid to the issue of inclusive education of the physically handicapped and individuals with disabilities (DA) in the system of general and professional education. The ideology excluding any form of discrimination of individuals with DA and ensuring equal treatment for all people but creating necessary conditions for individuals with special educational needs lies at the basis of inclusive education [1, 2].

The extremely important task of creating the modern social protection system for individuals with disabilities is being currently solved, at that, particular attention is paid to the issue of providing access to professional education.

Upon accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 the Russian Federation has faced the issue of development of inclusive education. Cooperative (inclusive) learning has been recognized by the world community as the most humane [3], therefore, this direction has become one of the basic ones in the Russian educational policy.

It is noted in the Convention that all the state parties should provide inclusive education at all levels including the higher education level.

The analysis of the existing inclusive education system in the Russian Federation allows us

to indicate that currently the most developed system is the educational system for individuals with DA at the level of preschool and school education. Taking into account the state policy focus on providing high-quality professional education and employment of individuals with DA [4, 5] the issue of need in organization of inclusive education in HEIs has been thrown into sharp relief. This is what allows creating optimum conditions for successful socialization of individuals with disabilities.

Main part

The issues of professional formation and employment of individuals with disabilities under conditions of modern Russia are highly relevant. This is primarily due to the fact that the number of people with various special needs is increasing. According to statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation 450 thousand children with disabilities attend schools in the Russian Federation of which only 15 thousand continue their studies in HEIs [6]. Such differences can be due to unpreparedness of higher educational institutions to accept students with special educational needs, lack of awareness of the opportunity to obtain higher education and due to psychological barriers of individuals with DA.

Every year 120 thousand of young Russian citizens with disabilities require the exercise of the right to education but far less of them enter the HEI or college. According to expert estimates 30 thousand students with disabilities study at state universities in

all courses which makes 4% of total possible number [6].

Today the inclusive educational system is being formed in the Russian Federation which provides an opportunity of integration of individuals with special needs to the fullest extent possible.

The following researches are addressing the issues of inclusive education in the Russian Federation: Professor, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education Malofeev N. N., Stanevsky A.G., Nikitina M.I., in particular, the issues of higher professional education of students with hearing problems (Stanevsky A.G., Ptushkin G.S.), vision problems (Nikulina G.V.) and mobility problems (Sarkisyan L.A.) are addressed; and the issues of professional education of students with intellectual disability (Starobina E.M.) are addressed. The problems of accessibility of higher education for the disabled are studied (Nikitina M.I.) as well as psychological and pedagogical and medical and social support of the disabled in the educational process (Nikitina M.I., Kantor V.Z.). Special educational technologies are developed (Khrapylina L.P.) as well as new ways of organizing the educational process (Ermolenko V.A.) for the disabled.

For many years the state support of the disabled in our country has been mainly limited to providing them with necessary treatment and rehabilitation means as well as minimum material compensation for inability to independently satisfy their survival needs. The corrective approach prevails in the educational system of the disabled in the Russian Federation as well as earlier in the USSR at all the levels which isolates disabled people from “normal” people and restricts freedom in their professional choice. Treatment of the disabled and their social status has gradually been changing only since 1990s.

Thus, discussing the historical aspect of higher education of individuals with DA we can conclude that the attempts to organize their professional education were made only in the 20th century. Obtaining higher education by individuals with DA has been rather exceptional up to the present moment.

In particular, the new approach to professional education of the disabled in Russia was marked in 1934 when individuals with hearing disabilities for the first time started to study at the Bauman Moscow State Technical University (Bauman MSTU) by special programs but in integrated conditions. Today Bauman MSTU is one of the leading universities in the Russian Federation addressing the problems of inclusive education. Today more than 200 students with hearing problems from the regions of the Russian Federation and CIS

countries are studying in the Bauman MSTU who are mastering 13 hardest engineering professions.

If we consider the total amount the statistics in our country is as follows: from among 3 thousand of national HEIs only 150 of them provide education to the disabled. For the country with such a large number of higher educational institutions this figure is considered to be low.

Thus, in a modern context the terms “inclusion” and “inclusive education” have become especially important as one of the priority areas of the state policy in the sphere of education.

Since September 1, 2013 the Russian Federation has been living under the new education law. This document for the first time has covered inclusive education at such a high level.

According to paragraph 1, Article 5 of the law of the Russian Federation “On Education” the citizens of the Russian Federation are guaranteed to have access to education regardless of the health condition. Restriction of rights to professional education based on the health condition can be established by the law only. According to paragraph 6 of the specified article the state creates for citizens with disabilities the necessary conditions for them to obtain education, for correction of developmental disabilities and social adaptation based on special pedagogical approaches [7].

Besides, the effective law of the Russian Federation “On Education” introduces clear definitions “student with DA” and “inclusive education”.

A student with disabilities is an individual with physical and (or) psychological disabilities confirmed by the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission and which make it difficult to obtain education without creating special conditions [7].

Inclusive education means ensuring equal access to education for all the students taking into account diversity of special educational needs and individual opportunities [7].

Inclusive education involves creating the necessary adaptive learning environment and providing support services not just providing the right to attend educational institutions.

Nowadays obtaining higher education by individuals with DA and their study in HEIs of the Russian Federation are rare and present great difficulties. First of all, we should note that inclusion in education places high demands to all the participants of the educational process. This requires intellectual and psychological mobilization from students with disabilities and tolerance, understanding and readiness to provide support from relatively healthy students. At the same time the lecturers

working in groups with students with DA face the barriers [8].

In order to assist in development of institutional foundations of higher education for the physically handicapped and individuals with disabilities the Interuniversity Expert Group of the Russian Rectors Union for inclusive higher education has been created in the Russian Federation which is headed by the Director of the Head Training and Research and Instructional Center of the Bauman MSTU Stanevsky Alexander Grigorievich.

According to Stanevsky A.G. today the university community faces the issue of searching and developing the strategy for actions of universities within implementing the state policy which is reflected in decrees of the President, in government orders and other regulatory acts where the priority of the social policy with respect to the disabled is their high-quality professional education and employment. Thus, universities become active subjects of the social policy with respect to this large category of citizens.

Introduction of inclusive learning in higher educational institutions in the Russian Federation will undoubtedly help the individuals with disabilities to exercise their right to obtaining higher education. However, we should speak about obtaining high-quality education on equal terms with other students rather than just obtaining education. Therefore, it is necessary to search optimum organizational and legal technology solutions.

As to the legal framework it is sufficiently ready. Today inclusive education in the territory of the Russian Federation is regulated by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federal Law "On Education" and the Federal Law "On Social Protection of Disabled People in the Russian Federation" and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Based on the foregoing, we can speak about the need to provide the students with special educational needs with equal rights and equal opportunities to obtain higher education. To achieve this goal it is necessary first of all to create the inclusive barrier-free learning environment where the students can freely move, study and obtain necessary information.

Let us review the main barriers and difficulties to be overcome in order to create affordable and supportive education for individuals with DA. The researchers have identified three groups of main barriers:

1. Physical;
2. Social and psychological;
3. Cognitive.

One of the most urgent problems restricting access of the disabled to obtaining professional

education is inadaptability of the infrastructure in educational institutions for the needs of the disabled. It is necessary to understand that lack of special lifts, ramps, handrails, specially equipped student places in classrooms, equipment and teaching aids indicates inaccessibility of a certain educational institution for the disabled.

Today the state program of the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" for the period of 2011 – 2015 is being implemented which should result in increased number of priority facilities, in particular, educational buildings accessible for the disabled and other people with limited mobility. Increase in accessible architectural structures from 12 to 45% by 2016 is expected [9].

According to the state program of the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" for the period of 2011 – 2015 increase in the number of educational institutions of secondary professional and higher education from 3 to 25% is planned buildings of which are adapted for study of individuals with DA.

The significant aspect is the social and psychological situation in the educational institution [10]. This refers to the nature of relations of individuals with DA with directors, teachers and other students. The problem lies in the need to create the so called psychological accessibility, i.e. to create general positive thinking and friendly atmosphere for the students with DA.

Individual with disabilities should be regarded as people with equal rights and the requirements should be similar for all the participants in the educational process. Ideally, we should achieve equally respectful partnership of the students regardless of their physical abilities.

It is necessary to note that not all the students are familiar with the concept of inclusion in education and it is difficult for them to understand essence of this problem. Therefore, it is reasonable to cover inclusive education courses in curriculum.

As to cognitive barriers it is necessary to take into account peculiarities of the individuals with DA. There is an opinion that this group of people is not able to understand curriculum content in full. It would be more correct to say that they experience difficulties in absorbing training material with the same rate, content and sequence. Therefore, training programs should be adapted and individuals with DA should be supported.

Besides, speaking about barriers we should not ignore the fact that a higher education institution and its staff should also be adapted to the needs of the students with disabilities using special technologies and training aids. It is necessary to create the

retraining and further training systems for teachers who work with the students with DA.

The above barriers should be considered and overcome not separately but as a whole.

Breaking down the barriers when obtaining access to high-quality education to our opinion will result in uniting the public space of individuals with DA and healthy people. In the course of time treatment of the disabled will change: this will be regarded as a peculiarity of a certain person rather than a disease. Inclusive education in the HEI is based on the fact that all the students regardless of their physical, intellectual and other peculiarities are included into the general education system and study together with their counterparts in educational institutions considering their special educational needs.

Conclusions

Today inclusive education can be rightfully considered as one of the priorities of the state educational policy in the Russian Federation. Transition to it is predetermined by the fact that our country has ratified the UN Conventions on the rights of children and rights of the disabled. However, to make such a transition not only relevant legal acts but also necessary conditions and favourable public opinion are required.

Thus, to organize inclusive educational environment at a university the following conditions are required:

1. State regulation of inclusive education in the HEI.
2. Architectural accessibility of campuses, indoor facilities, hostels, sports and cultural facilities.
3. Psychological and pedagogical retraining of teachers in higher education institutions.
4. Tolerant moral atmosphere in the student community.
5. Providing students with DA with study aids and necessary equipment based on their individual peculiarities.
6. Providing learning and teaching aids adapted to students' needs if necessary.

Thus, inclusion is the process of changing the whole educational institution in which all high school employees, parents, students, officials and the entire society are involved and which is aimed at removing the barriers for equal and open participation of all students including those with physical disabilities in the educational process and activities at the HEI.

6/26/2014

Inclusive education is based on the ideas of common education space for the heterogeneous group with different educational routes for certain participants.

Corresponding Author:

Dr.Fajzrahmanova Aliya Tahirzyanovna
Kazan (Privolzsky) Federal University
Mezhlauka Street, 1, Kazan, 420008, Russia

References

1. Kim, J., 2011. Influence of teacher preparation programmes on preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3(15): 355-377.
2. Polat, F., 2011. Inclusion in education: A step towards social justice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 1(31): 50-58.
3. Tvardovskaya, A.A., 2013. On training of speech pathologist specialists for work in conditions of inclusive education. *Collection of Research Papers of the International Research-to-Practice Conference "Current problems of psychology for special needs and correctional pedagogy: theory and practice"* March 5, 2013. Under the editorship of Akhmetzyanova, A.I. Kazan: Otechestvo, 7: 33-38.
4. Akhmetzyanova, A.I., 2014. Correction of Sensorimotor Functions of Pre-Lingual Children with Cerebral Palsy in the Context of Lekoteka. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 29(6): 743-746.
5. Akhmetzyanova, A.I., 2014. The Development of Self-Care Skills of Children with Severe Mental Retardation in the Context of Lekoteka. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 29(6): 724-727.
6. Interuniversity expert group on inclusive higher education. Date Views 11.06.2014 http://www.rsr-online.ru/o_commicii6.php.
7. Law of the Russian Federation "On education in the Russian Federation" of 29.12.2012 #273-FL.
8. Brandon, T. and J. Charlton, 2011. The lessons learned from developing an inclusive learning and teaching community of practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(15): 165-178.
9. State Program of the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" for the period of 2011-2015.
10. Hill, D. and D. Brown, 2013. Supporting inclusion of at risk students in secondary school through positive behaviour support. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(17): 868-881.