

Education for Persons with Special Needs: Polish and Russian Experience

Roza A. Valeeva

Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, RUSSIA

Ewa M. Kulesza

The Maria Grzegorzewska University, POLAND

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The beginning of the 21st century is marked by systemic, economic and social transformations in Poland and Russia, that significantly affected the education system, including the education for persons with special needs. This paper is an attempt to present synthetically the changes relating to persons with disabilities. The current state of the education for children and youth with special needs will be considered due to the new education system, legal regulations, the school population, type of disability of pupils and the kinds of schools they attend. Compulsory education, which includes the level of primary and lower secondary schools, will be subject to a separate analysis. The article presents significant systemic changes in Polish and Russian education and the state development strategy in the sphere of social policy towards persons with disabilities. The new documents are analyzed that have led to important changes in policy direction with serious consequences in terms of the structure and curriculum of inclusive education in both countries. The paper introduces a review of the changes in policy direction with serious consequences in terms of the structure and curriculum of education for persons with special needs. A key objective of the paper will be to examine the new approaches to education of disabled persons in Russia and Poland and the subsequent changes in it.

Keywords: disabled children, disability, persons with special needs, education, inclusive education, Poland, Russia

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the subject

One of the important issues of education in many countries is its availability for all social groups, especially for those who have unfavorable starting positions. Among them a special place is occupied by children with disabilities. Getting a quality education is often hindered for them by constraints in one way or another connected with social inequalities (Aksenova, 1997). Sociological studies conducted in the West and in Russia, since the 1960s, have shown that education, as a rule, confirm the existing inequalities. One indicator of this is that as the responsibility for

Correspondence: Roza A. Valeeva,
Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, 18 Kremlyovskaya Street, 420008, Kazan,
RUSSIA
E-mail: valeykin@yandex.ru
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learning outcomes rests with the teachers, who pay the most attention to more able students, while children with disabilities are at the bottom of the school hierarchy (Analytical Bulletin, 2007). The development of education involves the development of scientific knowledge in different directions to meet pressing social needs. Modern teacher is often faced with the problem of teaching children with special educational needs. This category of students is one of the most difficult and unstable in terms of perception and the development of educational information. Disabilities promote social deadaptation of these children, difficulties in communication, learning, and vocational guidance in the future (Aksenova et al., 2000). In this regard, the study of an optimal ways and forms of integration children with disabilities into society stands among the top priorities of pedagogical science and practice.

Problem statement

According to UN statistics, every tenth of the world family brings up a disabled child whose development is often caused by unfavorable factors aggravating solution to the problem of social and cultural adaptation (United Nations..., 2009).

According to the results of the National Census of Population and Housing from 2011, the number of disabled people in total amounted at the end of March 2011 is approximately 4.7 million (exactly 4697.0 thousand) in Poland. Thus, the number of disabled people accounted for 12.2% of the population compared with 14.3% in 2002 (nearly 5.5 million people with disabilities in 2002). The share of male participation among persons with disabilities was 46.1% compared to 53.9% for women.

The number of legally disabled population (with the statement) at aged of 16 years and over decreased gradually from 1997 to 2012 (from 4.6 million to 3.4 million). In the years 2008 - 2009 this number decreased by 200 thousand, from 3.7 million to 3.5 million, and from 2010 to 2012 was at the same level - 3.4 million people. The reduction in the number of people with disabilities is likely to be the result of the verification of disability criteria and enhanced control of the institution issuing the statement concerning a disability (Dane demograficzne, 2015).

In the Russian Federation there is also some tendency to increase in the number of children with disabilities. On January 1, 2015 the number of disabled children under the age of 18 years according to the Russian Federation Pension Fund amounted to 590 400 people, which is 1.4% more than in 2013 year (in 2012 - 571,465; in 2013 - 582 234; in 2014 - 590 400 disabled children).

According to the annual federal statistical reporting, number of children, for the first time recognized as disabled increased from 70,734 people in 2013 to 72,801 people in 2014. Initially recognized for "disabled child" category: in 2012 - 71 345; in 2013 - 70 734; in 2014 - 72 801 people.

In the structure of disability by age, children under 3 years dominate, which make up 44.2% in 2014, with increasing age the percentage is reduced, and in the age group 15-17 years 7.1% of the total number of children is for the first time recognized as disabled (State report, 2015).

The increasing number of disabled children in both countries actualizes researches of education of children with special educational needs. Interest in the problem of social protection of children with disabilities is evidenced by the increasing number of studies, monographs, books and articles devoted to this topical issue around world. Issues of social protection of children are considered in many works of Polish and Russian researchers. The origins of the study of social protection of disabled children were laid in the works of such renowned educators as P. P. Blonsky (1925), V. P. Kashchenko & G. A. Murashev (1929), J. Korczak (1978), M. Grzegorzewska (1964).

Matters affecting the theory and practice of social protection of children with disabilities are studied by M. Gil (2007), E. I. Holostova & N. F. Dementieva (2012), E. Kulesza (2013).

Children's disability, its structure, problems and characteristics of the phenomenon are reflected in the works of L. V. Vasilchenko (1992), N. F. Dementieva, N. N. Malofeev (1994), G. N. Bagaeva & T. N. Isayeva (1996), I. V. Perevoznikova (2012).

Medical and social aspects of child disability in general, the issues of rehabilitation are reflected in the works of L. I. Aksenova (1997), F. E. Sheregi (2003), E. G. Savrasov (2003), L. N. Krivtsov et al. (2012), V. Batsiev et al. (2003).

The problems of disabled children's integration into society are studied by I. V. Larikova (2014), R. A. Valeeva & I. D. Demakova (2015).

Certain aspects of inclusive education of children with disabilities are discussed in the works of J. Jastrzb (1995), J. Kwapisz (2006), F. L. Wilczenski (1995), M. Federowicz & M. Sitek (2009), A. Starczewska et al. (2012).

METHODS

A complex variety of methods, complementing each other was used: analysis and synthesis of the regulatory, legislative, instructional and teaching papers and materials on management and procedure studies on teacher education modernization in Russia; study and generalization of innovative teaching experience.

RESULTS

Students with special educational needs (SEN)

According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of April 30, 2013 on principles of providing and organizing psychological and educational assistance in public preschools, schools and institutions, the group of persons with special educational needs (SEN) provided with psychological and educational assistance includes students/children whose individual psychophysical abilities are a result of:

- 1) a disability (intellectual disabilities, visual impairments: blind and low vision children, hearing impairments: deaf and hard-of-hearing children, motor disabilities including aphasia, multiple disabilities, autism including Asperger syndrome),
- 2) social maladjustment,
- 3) risk of social maladjustment,
- 4) special gifts and talents,
- 5) specific learning difficulties,
- 6) language communication disorders,
- 7) a chronic disease,
- 8) crisis or traumatic situations,
- 9) academic failures,
- 10) environmental neglect connected with the living conditions of a student and his or her family, the way of spending free time, community interactions,
- 11) adaptation difficulties related to cultural differences or to a change of educational setting including previous education abroad experience (Journal of Laws, 2013).

The concept of "children with special educational needs" in Russia includes all students, whose educational problems go beyond the generally accepted norm. The common term "children with special educational needs" emphasizes the need to

provide additional support in the education of children who have certain features in development (Russian Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1997).

Children with special needs are divided into the following categories:

- The hearing impaired (deaf, deafened, with hearing loss);
- Visually impaired (blind, blinded, with low vision);
- With intellectual disabilities (mental retardation, mental retardation);
- With speech disorders;
- With disorders of the musculoskeletal system;
- With a complex structure disorders (mentally retarded blind or deaf, deaf-blind, and others.);
- With the emotional-volitional disorders and children with autism (On the observance of the rights, 2006).

Children and youth with SEN in Poland can learn in three types of preschools and schools:

1. Mainstream preschools and schools (1-2 children with special needs in a group/classroom, a maximum of 30 children – specialist activities in counseling centers),
2. Integrative preschools and schools (proportion: one child with special needs to four children without problems, a maximum of 20 children; support – special educator during lessons, resource room [additional activities]; speech therapist, physical therapist, psychologist – optionally), and
3. Special preschools and schools (the number of children depends on disability; special educators, speech therapist, physical therapist, psychologist) (Kulesza, 2013).

The Law № 273 "On Education in the Russian Federation" in particular Article 79 defines the conditions of training and education of children with disabilities (Federal Law... 2012). As shown by statistics, at present, more than half of children with disabilities, for various reasons, are enrolled in public schools, therefore the need for regulation of the process at the legislative level is long overdue. According to the above-mentioned article of the Law №273 «On Education in the Russian Federation" at the present time, children with SEN have the opportunity to study in public schools, and, as in the special classes set up at public schools and in the mass school. Children with SEN trained on the basic educational programs adapted or designed for them, tailored educational programs, providing integrated support of the educational process of children with developmental disorders at different levels (Federal Law on social protection, 1995).

Special education

Special education is organized for children and youths with special educational needs, including the young disabled, and may be fulfilled within the school system or in the form of individual instruction. Special education (at the level of primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school) takes place in individually-functioning special schools or in generally-accessible mainstream schools, in which the following sections are created — special, integration, mainstream or therapeutic and compensatory, as well as in special educational centers or healthcare institutions (including health resorts). Pupils with special educational needs study within one of the established educational systems after they have been referred by a public psychological-pedagogical counseling center (or other public specialist counseling center) for the need of special or individual education" (GUS, 2014, 45). The law defines the following groups of students who are to be provided with special education, upbringing and care:

1. With intellectual disabilities/mental handicaps,

2. Blind and low vision,
3. Deaf and hard-of-hearing
4. With motor disabilities, including aphasia,
5. With multiple disabilities,
6. With autism, including Asperger syndrome,
7. Socially maladjusted,
8. At risk of social maladjustment (Journal of Laws, 2014).

In 2008, the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (United Nations Resolution, 2006) was adopted in Russia, which guarantees every child with a disability access to the inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education in the communities in which they residence. In recent years, some positive changes have taken place in special education in Russia. It adopted a number of legal documents of departmental and interdepartmental character, defining the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities and regulating the bases of state policy with regard to them. The Government of the Russian Federation approved the model provisions of the special (correctional) educational institutions for students and pupils with disabilities, of health education institutions - sanatorium for children in need of long-term treatment, of an educational institution for children in need of psycho-pedagogical and health and social care; order of upbringing and education of children with disabilities at home and in private educational institutions; other regulatory legal acts in compliance with international standards. A draft of the Federal Law "On education of persons with disabilities (special education)", received high praise from both Russian and foreign specialists.

The concept of reforming the system of special education, psychology and special service concept in education, concept of a federal system of continuous multilevel integrated vocational training of disabled persons are implemented. The proposals to improve the training, retraining and advanced training for special education are developed. The differentiated network of special (correctional) educational institutions is being improved. In addition to the eight types of special (correctional) educational institutions, schools and groups for children with severe disorders of emotional and volitional and behavior, with profound mental retardation, combined with the complex and other developmental disorders are opened as pilot sites. There are different forms of training integration of persons with disabilities in educational institutions, including vocational training forms (Moscow State Technical University, Bauman Moscow State Pedagogical University, St. Petersburg State Pedagogical University, Institute of Ural Social State pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk State University, Shadrinsk Sports and Teachers College (Kurgan region).

The Russian Government adopted a decree on granting subsidies to subjects of the Russian Federation to carry out activities to build a network of basic educational organizations, which will create conditions for inclusive education of children with disabilities.

With the 82 subjects of the Russian Federation an agreement on the creation of 2,600 basic schools, which will create the conditions for access to quality education of children with disabilities to inclusion conditions was signed (State report, 2015).

Obligatory primary and lower secondary school education (gymnasium) for students with SEN in Poland

In the 2013/2014 school year 60.1 thousand pupils with special educational needs attended mainstream primary schools and special primary schools for children and youth (Fig. 3). They represented 2.8% of the population of pupils of

primary schools for children and youth. This proportion since the school year 2002/2003 oscillates between 2.7-2.9% (GUS, 2014, 90).

In the school years 2007/2008 and 2013/2014 the school population (due to demographic slowdown) decreased, including a number of students with disabilities. The number of pupils with SEN in the year 2013/2014 compared to the year 2007/2008 decreased by 5336 people, it is about 8.15%.

Pupils with a mild intellectual disability were the largest group of all pupils with disabilities in comparable school years - 2007/2008 and 2013/14, respectively 22739 and 17795 persons.

Inclusion school indicator (education of pupils with disability and pupils with successful development together in mainstream (inclusive) and integrative schools) over the last six years has remained at the same level: in 2007/2008 was around 60.1%, while in 2013/2014 amounted to 61.3%.

It should be noted that pupils with severe and complex disabilities, such as deafness, blindness, moderate or severe intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, usually attended special schools.

The population of secondary school students (gymnasium) also decreased by 15.2%: 56937 students were taught in the school year 2007/2008, and in the 2013/2014 school year already 48306 persons. Students with intellectual disabilities in the gymnasium represented the largest group of all persons with disabilities.

Noteworthy is the decreasing rate of inclusion in the gymnasium compared to the primary school. It amounted at the gymnasium to 45.1% in the 2007/2008 school year and to 46.6% in the 2013/2014 school year. Statistical data (GUS, 2014) clearly show the decline of the rate of inclusion at the level of basic vocational training - in the 2013/2014 school year it reached 15.2%. Vocational training requires a special, very specific organization of the teaching process, and therefore probably occurs narrow specialization and create a new educational paths.

Obligatory primary and lower secondary school education) for students with SEN in Russia

Currently, in the Russian Federation according to the unified information network of the Russian Ministry of Education (at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year) in educational institutions enrolled 481,587 children with SEN, including:

212,167 children - in 1660 separate educational institutions, engaged in educational activities adapted for general education programs;

110 295 children - 13 443 individual classes, performing educational activities adapted for general education programs at schools;

159,125 children - in inclusive classes of educational institutions (State report..., 2015).

The right of children's with SEN parents to choose educational organizations is stipulated by the federal legislation.

In accordance with the Federal Law of December 29, 2012 № 273-FZ "On Education in the Russian Federation", the order of the Ministry of Education of Russia on January 22, 2014 № 32 "On approval of the order of enrollment of citizens for training on educational programs of primary general education programs of primary general, basic and secondary education admission to educational organization can not be denied because of the state of the child's health or lack of education organization of special conditions for the education of children with SEN.

To implement the right of parents to choose education for a child with SEN in some educational institutions, engaged in educational activities according adapted

general educational programs a network of organizations that specialize in teaching children certain categories operates:

- for deaf students - 63 schools, in which 6610 students;
- for the hearing impaired - 89, in which 10,203 students;
- for the blind - 15, in which 2113 students;
- for the visually impaired - 84, in which 11,069 students;
- for students with severe speech disorders - 65, in which 10 964 students;
- for students in violation of the musculoskeletal system - 55, in which 7464 students;
- for students with mental retardation - 117, in which 19,395 students;
- for students with mental retardation (intellectual impaired) - 1172, in which 153,349 students (State report..., 2015).

Systemic changes to the law and organization of education for students with SEN in Poland

A significant step was taken by the ratification of 6 September, 2012 the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ratification of the Convention should contribute to the improvement and better implementation of the law relating to persons with disabilities, which -undoubtedly- will improve their situation.

In Poland, irrespective of educational setting (special, integrative or mainstream schools) of pupils/students, the development of Individualized Education and Therapy Programs (IETPs) for persons with statements of special educational needs is required by the law (Journal of Laws, 2013).

Since 2010 year the educational system changes have been made. They are related to the organization of education of students with disabilities, especially in mainstream schools. These changes put in necessity of recognition by teachers, educators and specialists special educational and developmental needs of pupils, including the recognition of specific learning difficulties, abilities and aptitudes, and giving them individual support in a learning environment. In the period from March 2010 until December 2011 the Polish Ministry of Education implement in partnership with the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw (Academy of Special Education) system project titled "Increasing the efficiency of education for pupils with special educational needs". Within the project the Maria Grzegorzewska University experts trained teachers to:

- a) provide the psychological and pedagogical support as closely as possible the child (student), in his/her learning environment, ie. in kindergarten, school and education facilities;
- b) recognize abilities, aptitudes or child's difficulties as early as possible, ie. in kindergarten and on the first stage of education in primary school (grades 1-3);
- c) implement educational and vocational counseling in gymnasia and post gymnasia schools.

Moreover, under the project:

- a) experts from the Maria Grzegorzewska University (Academy of Special Education) trained 489 leaders;
- b) then the leaders conducted information and consultation meetings for more than 50 thousand teachers throughout the country;
- c) through boards of education free of charge teaching materials were handed to all kindergartens, schools and institutions principals, teachers and parents in order to assist them in working with children and youth with special needs, including pupils with disabilities. These materials are also available on the website of the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Education Development. It has also launched information and communication platform, through which the experts responded to questions.

There were also undertaken efforts for a greater integration of children and youth with disabilities in the general education system. The Polish Council of Ministers at the meeting on 25 September 2012 accepted *Document Long-term National Development Strategy 2020*, which takes into account the area of education of children and youth with disabilities and social adaptation of adults. Issues considered in this document are the following:

- a) to implement activation programs reserves in the labor market (earlier start of young people, greater participation of women, elderly and disable persons, improving the employability of inactive citizens);
- b) to create conditions for increasing employment of persons with disabilities in the open labor market;
- c) to organize social campaigns preparing local communities, employers, government officials to an active functioning of people with disabilities in society;
- d) to make investments in infrastructure to allow the disable persons to the presence in the public space;
- e) to develop a new curricula incorporating people with disabilities.

Systemic changes to the law and organization of education for students with SEN in Russia

Currently, there is a sufficient legal framework for the implementation of the constitutional right to education of persons with disabilities, regardless of their place of residence (in the family, residential social service institutions, neuropsychiatric boarding schools, etc.) and the severity of impaired development and health, which determines the law enforcement practice in the Russian Federation.

There were approved the Federal state educational standards of education of students with disabilities (Order N1598 of December 19, 2014 "On approval of the Federal state educational standard primary education of students with disabilities", order N1599 of December 19, 2014 "On approval of the Federal state educational standard of education of students with mental retardation (intellectual disabilities), which will be the main regulatory documents establishing uniform state requirements for education of students with disabilities.

Testing of the Federal state educational standards of education of students with disabilities began on 1 September 2014 in 124 educational institutions from 24 regions of the Russian Federation (in the framework of the competitive selection of the winners of the regional education development programs for 2014 and 2015 on "The spread on the whole territory of the Russian Federation successful socialization patterns of children" for the federal budget in the amount of 291.150 thousand rubles, and on its own initiative, taking into account regional support).

On behalf of the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation for Persons with Disabilities there was designed and agreed with the Ministry of Sports of Russia, Russian Ministry of Labor, Russian Ministry of Health and sent to the subjects of the Russian Federation interdepartmental comprehensive plan for the organization of inclusive education and the creation of special conditions for the education of disabled children for 2015 (priority actions).

The comprehensive action plan includes the establishment of a mechanism of ensuring the conditions for education at different levels: the system of early intervention, the development of psycho-pedagogical support system, actions to improve the quality of pre-school, inclusive, special, remote and additional education of this category of students; They include measures to improve the legislation and regulatory support, to improve statistical accounting, monitoring and research, developing mechanisms of interagency cooperation, training and retraining, personnel policy. The comprehensive plan also includes measures aimed at preserving and developing the network of educational institutions offering

training adapted basic educational programs (special (correctional) educational institutions), improving the efficiency of the system of training and re-training of professional staff, the development of policy measures on the regulation of financial security system education, early intervention and psycho-pedagogical support.

The implementation of the comprehensive plan will ensure the development of the system of preschool, general and additional education of children with disabilities.

For a complete organization of teaching children with SEN in educational institutions a full range of measures is to be implemented - from the creation of a universal barrier-free environment and equipping schools with all necessary equipment to train of teachers to work in conditions of inclusive education.

Russian Ministry of Education in collaboration with the executive bodies of subjects of the Russian Federation, engaged in management education, implemented the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" activities of the state program for 2011-2015, under which the barrier-free environment is created that provides both unhindered access of disabled people in buildings, and provide educational organization implementing educational programs of general education, conducting joint education of children with disabilities and children without developmental disorders with specialized equipment for training and ensuring the correction process.

By the end of 2015 a universal barrier-free environment was created in the 9000 base of educational institutions, which is not less than 20% of the total number of conventional educational institutions.

DISCUSSIONS

The beginning of the 21st century is marked in social sciences, especially in special education, by the reinforcement of the humanistic perspective, the center of which are persons with unique characteristics, abilities and individual needs. That is why in Poland the term 'special educational needs' is being used more and more frequently in educators' and policy-makers' conceptual frameworks and in legal acts. This term refers to students whose individual developmental and educational needs and individual psychophysical abilities result from their disabilities or other internal factors (e.g. special gifts and talents) or external factors (e.g. environmental neglect), and their education has to be specially adapted to satisfy these needs.

In the area of special education in Poland the following trends can be distinguished: 1) increase in the interest in disability issues as a result of global trends and internal policy; 2) persons with disabilities are granted the same rights as nondisabled individuals (e.g. compulsory education) in domestic legislation and the main international legal act - the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - which was ratified by Poland; 3) more attention is given to political correctness toward persons with disabilities; 4) politics is more socially orientated; 5) educational offer for students with special needs is extended; and 6) favorable conditions are created for shared education and shared use of social space (Kulesza, 2013).

Every child in Russia, regardless of the severity of the disability, is given the opportunity to exercise their right to education in institutions of any type with the necessary specialized assistance. More flexible forms of education are introduced: special alternative institutions, training in specialized classes of mainstream schools, learning at home with visiting teachers, distance learning. Among the most controversial issues at the present stage are beginning to be considered quality issues, openness and availability of special education. On the one hand, this form of training does bring significant benefits in education, treatment, training, maintenance, professional orientation for students requiring special approach and

adapted environment. Special education as a classical form of training, having in Russia long-term practice, suggests special conditions for students with various limitations of life, individual teaching methods and teaching methods, sparing modes of load capacity, medical, social and psychological support of the educational process.

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted led us to the following conclusions:

- 1) Statistics show that the number of children with disabilities is increasing every year.
- 2) Children with disabilities are children who have significant limitations of life, leading to social exclusion as a result of violation of child growth and development, ability to self-service, mobility, orientation, control over their behavior, training, employment in the future.
- 3) In the Russian Federation and in Poland, work with disabled children and their families in which they are brought up are being built in accordance with international documents; normative legal acts; and national target programs; documents adopted at the regional level.
- 4) The most pressing problem at the moment is to improve the quality of special education on the basis of and in accordance with national interests, economic opportunities, and cultural traditions of the country, with a focus on the personal development of students, to increase their adaptation capacity in the process of preparing for an independent entry into the life. One of the ways to solve this problem - strengthening the integrative processes in education.

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