

Features of Correctional Development Work In the Sensory Room with Children with Disabilities

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The relevance of the stated problem in the article is caused by the need to expand the activities of correctional development work in the sensory room with children with disabilities. Work in the sensory room helps to stabilize the emotional state of a child of this category, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of correctional and developmental measures for his/her rehabilitation. This research work allows studying the effectiveness of rehabilitation measures carried out in the sensory room and identifying major areas of correctional and developmental work in supporting a child with disabilities. The goal of the article lies in developing a multi-component technology of correctional development work in the sensory room with children of the specified category. As a leading method of investigation of this problem the interviewing was selected, which allows identifying the effectiveness of the conducted activities in the sensory room. The article describes possibilities for psycho-pedagogical support of children with disabilities; discloses the potentialities of interaction of various specialists of psychological and pedagogical support in sensory room conditions; the role of parent-child relationships in the development of children with disabilities has been substantiated.

Keywords: children with disabilities, sensory room, correctional and developmental work, psycho-pedagogical support, parent-child relationships

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there is a tendency of a mass trouble in the development of infants, preschool and school age. The reasons leading to the increase in the number

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of children with deviations in psycho-physical development are socially determined and depend on factors such as the environment, economic position in society, family background and parents' health, living conditions and upbringing in the family, in the educational institution. In addition, among children there is an increasing number with emotional and behavioral difficulties and communication problems.

The lack of timely and effective remedial assistance to children in sensitive periods leads to serious problems in the development. This involves abnormalities in the activity of higher cognitive processes (perception, attention, memory, and thinking) in the formation of mental personality traits, which greatly impede the process of socio-cultural development of the child. Therefore, the problem of finding ways to provide specialized assistance to a child and training competent professionals is one of the most urgent at the present stage of development of psychological and pedagogical support in educational institutions. This is due to the search for new forms and methods of training the prospective specialists in the framework of the special (speech pathology) education (Nigmatullina & Artemyeva, 2015).

Today, on the basis of the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education (FSBEI HPE) "Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute named after M.E. Evseviev" there functions "Mordovia basic center of teacher education" (MBCTE) (Shukshina, 2011). The purpose of MBCTE – is psychopedagogical and scientific-methodical support; socio-cultural and psychopedagogical support of professional and personal development of subjects of various spheres of culture, promotion of the development of personnel potential of the region (Shukshina, et al., 2014). As part of the MBCTE work there are also covered children with disabilities (Ezhovkina & Ryabova, 2015; Vardanyan & Ruskina, 2013).

In the single concept of the Special Federal State Standard it is said that children with health limitations are the children, whose health conditions prevent the acquisition of educational programs outside of special conditions of training and upbringing. A group of children with disabilities are extremely diverse. It includes children with different developmental disabilities: hearing, vision, speech, locomotor, intelligence, with severe disorders of emotional-volitional sphere, including early infantile autism; with delays and complex developmental disabilities. The degree of disability severity may be various: both mild (suppressed, latent), and severe (coarse, aggravated).

At present there is insufficient experience of the use of the sensory room technology when working with children with disabilities. In most cases, the methods of working in the sensory room are aimed at relieving psychoemotional stress in healthy children; however, children with disabilities are especially in need of correction of deviations in emotional-volitional and behavioral spheres, because it is these disorders which prevent their entry into society.

The lack of working procedures in the sensory room for children with disabilities requires the development of correctional development work technology using the equipment intended for this category of children.

Scientific and methodological basis for remedial and developmental work in the sensory room for children with disabilities appeared to be the provisions of the domestic developmental psychology, special psychology and correctional pedagogy: the role of early childhood in personality development of a child; the unity of biological and social (cultural) development plans; the ratio of primary and secondary disabilities; the zone of proximal development; sensitive periods of development; the role of education in development and developmental teaching; correction and compensation; the unity of diagnostics and development; sign/symbolic nature of children's activities and the role of a sign in cultural development of a person. (Vygotksy, 2006; Leontiev, 2005; Lisina, 2009).

The sensory room is a specially-designed room for therapeutic and preventive treatments necessary for children and adults with various developmental disabilities, and to improve the quality of life of healthy people. The sensory room is a multifunctional complex, which is able to significantly optimize the development of children of preschool and school age. Staying in an unusual poly-sensory environment allows the child to relax as much as possible, to be liberated, to calm down, to feel protected, to feel confident, tune into active life, which in turn creates favorable prerequisites for correctional and developmental work. In recent years there has been much research aimed at harnessing the potential of the sensory room on correctional purposes with different groups of children. Widely discussed are the issues of organizing the work in the sensory room with different categories of children with disabilities (Gudkova, 2013; Sokolova, 2010).

In addition, as part of the work in the sensory room it is possible to realize work with parents of children with disabilities. This is extremely important, as domestic and foreign researchers note that the interaction with the mother or other significant adults is the basis for the development of all activities of the child with disabilities and his relations with the surrounding world, and distortion of parent-child relationships lead to emotional-behavioral disorders, intellectual, motor, mental and psychosomatic developmental disabilities of a child (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Byrne, 2010; Berger & Cunningham, 1983; Winnicott, 2004; Vygotsky, 2006; Inevatkina, 2010; Inevatkina, 2013; Inevatkina, 2015; Leifer, 1977; Mercer, 2004; Emde and Brown, 1978; Emmanuele et al., 2008; 2010).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research work involved 57 mothers raising children with disabilities and 38 professionals working with children with disabilities. The study was conducted by interviewing mothers whose children with disabilities attended remedial classes in the sensory room and specialists who worked directly with this category of children and their parents in the sensory room.

Interviewing mothers was conducted for the purpose of collecting follow-up data concerning the characteristics of emotional and mental development of the child before and after remedial classes held in the sensory room. The interview was in person, it was based on a scheme that included two types of questions:

(a) questions concerning the peculiarities of mental development of children with disabilities: emotional state (level of aggression, anxiety, etc.); somatic state of the child (hearing, vision, cardiovascular system, digestive system, etc.); development of self-service skills; development of motor skills; speech development;

b) questions aimed at finding out the impact of classes in the sensory room on the child's development.

Interviewing professionals working with children with disabilities was conducted in person with the purpose of collecting information relating to the necessity of applying the sensory room equipment in correctional work with children with disabilities; it was found out for what purpose the specified area was used; the level of the specialists' satisfaction was studied, who have a sensory room equipment for the implementation of remedial and developmental tasks.

RESULTS

The results obtained from interviewing mothers showed that the level of the emotional state of children, who attended remedial classes in the sensory room, significantly improved: 56.14 % of mothers indicated when interviewed that anxiety level of their children had decreased from high to medium (26.31%) and to low

(29.83 %). In addition, 45.61 % of the participants indicated that levels of aggression of their children somewhat decreased from medium to low. Most of the mothers (78.94%) who had participated in the interview noted the effectiveness of the remedial classes in the sensory room.

Next, we will present the results of the interview of professionals working with children with disabilities in the sensory room. The obtained data showed that, without exception, the experts (100 %) stressed the need to use the sensory room technology in working with children with disabilities. According to the results of the interview 7.89 % of the experts in the sensory room conducted remedial and developmental work on the adaptation of children to the educational institution; 63.15 % – on the regulation of the emotional state and behavior (reduction of the level of anxiety and aggressiveness); 36.84 % – on the increase in the level of self-esteem, self-confidence, development of communication skills.

Analyzing the results of the work in the sensory room, the teachers reported that most children significantly reduced the level of anxiety (52.63%), and aggressiveness (10.52 %), returned to normal levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (19.29 %), and their communication skills were greatly developed (17.55 %).

The majority of the interviewed teachers expressed satisfaction with the range of the equipment necessary for working in the sensory room, and only 5.26 % need additional equipment. To the question "What causes difficulties at the work in the sensory room with children with disabilities?" the following responses were received: no difficulty – 57.97 %, lack of necessary equipment – 10.52 %, inactivity of the necessary competencies – 10.52 %, organizational difficulties (mode of the classes, limited training time in the sensory room, etc.) – 21.05 %. Evaluating the implementation of their own work in the sensory room with children with disabilities, the majority of the teachers (86.84 %) indicated satisfaction with the results.

For the professionals' working a multi-component technology of correctional and developmental work in the sensory room with children with disabilities was proposed.

The first component provides correction of the psycho-physical and emotional-personal development of the child with disabilities. Its objectives are: prevention of psycho-physical and emotional stress; creation of a positive emotional state; perception of color, sound, rhythm, coordination of movements of one's own body; relief of anxiety, switching of the energy of anxiety into constructive direction; formation of adequate self-esteem, overcoming of fears and aggression; development of children's positive communication and interaction with each other (children; mother and child), etc. In the sensory room there is the impact on three main channels of human perception of the world – kinesthetic, auditory and visual (by way of tactile sensations, sound, and color).

In the framework of implementation of the first component, a programme of "Correctional development work in the sensory room with children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities" was proposed (Zolotkova, 2013; 2014). The program involves working with children in the sensory room, which consisted in the following:

- conducting relaxation training, which reduces anxiety, as well as aggression, and teaches self-regulation;
- organization of stimulating exercises designed to activate and develop sensory functions in children with disabilities (visual and auditory perception, touch, and spatial perception);
- carrying out exercises aimed at the development of interest in the surrounding reality and stimulation of cognitive activity;

– organization of direct communication, which is of great importance for the overall psychological development of a child with disabilities, the development of his/her self-esteem and formation as a personality.

As the main goal of the correctional development work with a child with disabilities in the sensory room there is the promotion of his/her social adaptation and successful integration into the environment of normally developing peers.

The second component involves the use of the sensory room equipment in psycho-pedagogical work with parents of children with disabilities. Its objectives are: correction of the psychological state of the mother experiencing the inferiority of her own child; correction of parent-child relationships through strengthening of their emotional contact; training mothers to special rehabilitative techniques required to overcome the difficulties of social and personal development of the child.

For the implementation of the second component there was offered a program "Correction of child-parent interaction" aimed at teaching social skills and interactions in the "parent-child" system. The training program consists of two modules: the first module – is a "school for parents"; the second – is "our different children". Within the first module there is psychological assistance to parents and their practical training in the interaction with their child. Topics of the second module allow isolating the emotional needs of the child and sorting out the specific situations, for example, arising when parenting an aggressive child (Inevatkina, 2013; 2014).

The fact that many parents do not know the emotional needs of their children and do not have the necessary skills for effective interaction with children on an emotional level creates various conflicts between them. This program promotes parental competence in understanding the inner needs of the child.

The third component involves interaction of various experts of psycho-pedagogical support (a psychologist, a social worker, a speech pathologist, an educator, and a speech therapist). Its purpose is the implementation of a targeted psychological and pedagogical interdisciplinary influence of the professionals, tailored to the special needs and socio-personal development of the child with disabilities.

When implementing the third component there was a program offered: "Organization of activity of experts of psycho-pedagogical support of children with disabilities in the sensory room". In the sensory room, there can be given integrated classes with high efficiency, during which each expert solves his/her professional task. The specialists used a variety of advantages of the sensory room: the high motivational capability of the equipment to cognition; the presence of the silhouette, abstract images that create ample opportunities for the development of various thematic subjects, real and fantasy images by the specialist and the child; the simultaneous interaction of relaxation and targeted correction; a wide range of age limits of the customers (from birth to old age); a narrow range of contraindications and limitations in the use of the equipment against various diseases (Bystrova & Zolotkova, 2014).

The implementation of these procedural components provides the interaction: the specialist – the child – the parent, which is indispensable to a comprehensive psycho-pedagogical support of children with disabilities.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Many scholars in their works touched upon matters concerning the correction of psycho-physical and emotional-personal development of the child with disabilities (Vygotsky, 2006; Leontiev, 2005; Lisina, 2009), quite many authors raise issues on the necessity of parental participation in rehabilitation activities of the child with

disabilities (Ainswort & Bowlby, 1991; Berger & Cunningham, 1983; Winnicott, 2004; Leifer, 1977; Mercer, 2004; Emde & Brown, 1978; Emmanuele et al., 2008; 2010; Ahmetzyanova, 2015). However, there are no works which would describe the effectiveness of rehabilitation activities for children with disabilities, implemented in the sensory room. Besides, no studies could be found that would propose multi-component correctional development work for children of this category, and their parents, conducted specifically with the help of the sensory room equipment. As the main difficulty encountered in the process of conducting remedial and developmental activities in the sensory room and the research in general, there may be noted the difficulty of attracting parents to actively participate directly in the undertaken work.

The analysis of the data obtained within this research lets us say about the activities' effectiveness held in the sensory room, which were aimed at stabilizing the current emotional state of a child with disabilities. This fact confirms the necessity of the multi-component nature of the correctional development work with the use of the sensory room equipment, within the support of children of this category. The implementation of the presented multi-component nature of the areas of the correctional and developmental work with the use of the sensory room equipment may contribute to the compensation of deviations in the emotional and socially-personal development of children with disabilities, ensure the normalization of the processes of their interaction with adults and normally developing peers, the adequacy of behavior in stressful situations, and, in general, facilitate the successful socialization into the society of this category of children and adolescents.

The results presented in the paper are of practical importance for speech pathologists, psychologists and teachers working with children with disabilities and their parents.

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