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**THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY IN
THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

The article describes the problems of inclusive education in Russia by the example of the activities of students and teachers of the Russian technical university (TUSUR). In the educational process of the university, the technology of group project training is actively applied and in 2006-07 year project group of students specializing in "Social work" performed a social project on the topic: "Supporting social adaptation of students with disabilities in a technical university." From 2009 until 2012, teachers of the Department of History and Social Work received a grant from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, which initiated the research and development of a new model for accompanying students with disabilities. Because of studying the experience of Russian and European universities in 2011, an amateur organization of students and teachers of the Department of History and Social Work called the Center for Support of Students with a Disability (CeSSI) was established in TUSUR. This organization was included in the structure of the university, received an audience for its work and funding. On the basis of the Center, teachers and students of project groups began to develop various forms of social work for the individual accompaniment of students with disabilities. This work has been developed in the micro-social environment to promote the ideas of inclusive education.

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Keywords: Inclusive education, social project, support for persons with disabilities, group social work, training.



1. Introduction

The problem of overcoming social isolation of people with disabilities in Russia, their integration into social life is now gaining greater importance. This is due to a new national policy, bigger influence of humanistic values as well as to the studying Western countries experience. Availability of the foreign publication and personal contacts with foreign colleagues promotes the idea of inclusive education both on the administrative level and in the university and educational environment. Lebedeva and Kulikova notice that the way has been made from deprivation and stigmatization to the possibility for people with disabilities to get education in special institutions and, the next step is “ to make a complex of organizational, methodological, medical and pedagogical and social pedagogical conditions to allow children with disabilities to be included into educational process, interact with other children and achieve results according to personal abilities and thus contributing to their integration in the society” (Levedeva, 2011). Osmuk (2010) gives attention to the necessity to enlarge professional opportunities for people with disabilities. Methods and approaches to the education of people with disabilities and the role of enabling principle are described by Zhigareva and Larionov (2010). Zaytsev (2009) in his article “In the spotlight - a student with a disability” reports that training at universities for people with disabilities can be arranged both on the individual and group programs.

2. Problem Statement

Nowadays there is a good legislative bases for integrating people with disabilities into educational institutions. The Federal laws “On Education” (1992) and “On Higher and Post university Education” (1996) define the benefits for people with disabilities, which allow people with disabilities of I-st and II-nd categories and also those who have a status “child with disability” to enter the universities without competition, base on positive entrance exams. Thus, by 2004 the number of people with disabilities at universities increased by 6 times. All the above regulations were also included into the new law “On Education in the Russian Federation” (2012). However, there is a lot to be done to practically support and realize these guarantees. The most of university buildings are old and have no lifts, so to create barrier free environment requires a lot of expenses.

Step forward is the adoption of the State program "Accessible Environment for 2011 - 2020 ", which provides unhindered access to priority facilities and services in the most important areas of life and improvement of medical and social expertise and rehabilitation in order to integrate people with disabilities into society, but this program has yet to be implemented.

3. Research Questions

On the other hand, teachers are often not psychologically ready to work with students with disabilities. However, the law does not provide for any support measures for these students, in most cases, they are left to themselves, with no attention given.

Currently, the system of higher education for people with disabilities in Russia has a structure defined by the order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation dated 24 May 2004 "On the federal head and regional training centers for Learning Disabilities." They identified five head teaching

centers for Learning Disabilities, which are Bauman Moscow State University (for students with hearing impairment), Moscow State Socio -Humanitarian Institute (for students with the diseases of muscular-skeletal system), Russian State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg (for students with visual impairment), Novosibirsk State Technical University (for students with disabilities of different etiology) and Moscow State Pedagogical University (for pedagogical students with disabilities of various etiology). In addition, 3 educational centers with a regional status were established: Vladimir State University, St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University, Chelyabinsk State University.

Thus, the number of institutions available for people with different disabilities made about 10 (from the total number of universities 1000), but generally, the proper system to guide and support those categories of people did not exist.

In these circumstances, the government encouraged the development of projects on adaptation and support for students with disabilities, based on the resources of universities, initiative and independent activities of the citizens. One such project was carried out from 2007 to 2011 at Tomsk State University of Control Systems and Radio Electronics (TUSUR). This is one of the young universities in the country, which is actively involved in scientific and technical projects, developing innovative educational technologies. In 2006 the university introduced a new form of education known as “Learning by development” technology. And in 2007 under this program the project “Social support for students with disabilities” was launched at the Humanities faculty (Scientific supervisor is associate professor V.I. Zinovieva). During the period 2007-2017 this topic was elaborated by several project groups, each working for 2 years and finishing the project with the diploma papers on the topics covered by the project activities. For example, the first group was engaged in developing the basic principles and directions of support activities for students with disabilities at the university, the second group were arranging the operation of the Center of social support for students with special needs and the third group focused their activity on the individual guidance for students with disabilities on the “student-to-student” principle.

4. Purpose of the Study

To define the experience of the functioning of support system for students with disabilities on the basis of group project training in a university.

5. Research Methods

The logical-structural method became the leading in the work and included sequential execution of four phases: analytical, research, testing and presentation of the main results. Each stage finished with the written report. Students came to work voluntarily, at the call of the soul; they all wanted the project to develop social work at the university not only as a service, but also as a research activity.

The leading principles in the activity of the Centre of Social Support for Students with Disabilities were psychosocial approach (aimed at achieving balance between the inner world of the student with disabilities and external circumstances) and ecosocial approach based on overcoming social exclusion using the growth of social responsibility, bringing people together in small and large social groups, integration and relationship.

6. Findings

The number of students with disabilities in all the departments and faculties of TUSUR usually vary from 47 to 50. The teachers together with the students developed a model of social support service for students with disabilities at a Russian universities. Underlying the model were the main social practices and social project activity, system analysis principle, psycho-social and ecosocial approaches. This resulted in a new public structure of the university, the Centre of Social Support for Students with Disabilities (CeSSI).

To solve the adaptation problems of students with disabilities at the university, it was necessary to study the following aspects: first, how independent such students are and how they see themselves and their environment; second what relation there are between students with disabilities and their healthy groupmates, and third, what students and teachers of the university think of the inclusive education.

In 2011 a survey was held to find out the attitude of the students towards inclusive education and students with disabilities. 100 students were questioned after watching a film about a person with disability. When asked "What is your attitude to the idea of inclusive education?" 47% gave a positive answer, 7% were negative and 26% were neutral. The survey also revealed that 47 % of the respondents supported the idea of inclusive education in Russia, while 11 % claimed it to be impossible. The outcomes of the survey confirmed general tolerant attitude towards the students with disabilities in academic groups but also showed that there are some conditions in the students environment which may provoke open or hidden discrimination. Thus, the need to form positive stereotypes of disability at university was recognized as one of the main directions.

The inner world of young people with disabilities in TUSUR was explored with the technique developed by Associate Professor, Ph.D., M.P. Shulmin who has visual impairment. The technique is designed so that having obtained a certain value of the index on a given scale, the researcher assigns it to the minimum, average or maximum, and relies on the interpretation proposed by the author of " SMI - Express" (SMI -inner world of people with disabilities) (Shulmin, 2008). Reliability and validity of the questionnaire is confirmed by a statistical analysis using the Kolmogorov -Smirnov test, Pearson parameter correlation coefficient, cluster analysis and content analysis. (Ibid.)

The objective of the social study was to find out the peculiarities of the personal development of people with disabilities. The sample group consisted of 9 day-time students with disabilities from TUSUR from different departments in their 1-3 years. The procedure was the following: each participant had a questionnaire with 99 questions and three options of answers. They had to choose the best option. After processing, the students with disabilities received the outcomes with recommendations. According to the outcomes of the SMI -survey the majority (8 out of 9) of people with disabilities have the following common features: satisfaction with the achieved goals, pursuit to new knowledge, striving to be effective, the desire not to be a loser. The constructively respond to failures. As a rule, they find it interesting to explore unlimited living space. This process of self-improvement occurs in parallel with the evaluation own strengths and capabilities. It contributes to speeding up the process of thinking, forms adapted social identity. This is manifested in the form of their unanimous desire to improve their communication culture, to build a fair relationship with others, to focus on emerging issues.

According to M.P. Shulmin, people with disabilities have their "subjective world." It represents the unity of their emotional moods, value-semantic position, coping strategies with life's difficulties and a system of "self"-identity, and even in situations of uncertainty and helplessness they are set to overcome the difficulties. Only a few experience acute negative feeling towards own disability.

Most students with disabilities do not see distance between disabled and healthy people.

People with disabilities participated in the survey mostly do things in their lives meaningfully and feel that others need them. All the mentioned above confirm that people with disabilities have reasonable value – sense position in life. All respondents adequately perceive their failures and successes of others, have a friendly attitude. Most of them are aware that they have enough strength to cope with life's difficulties. Almost everybody reported satisfaction from life as they achieve goals and react adequately to failures. Almost all the students with disabilities involved in the survey, equally perceived both successes and tribulations of life. They do not find limiting their capabilities due to a disability a problem. Many traced a burning desire to be recognized by others, but not everybody is willing to change in order to achieve this goal. All respondents focused on new knowledge, strive to improve. However, among them there are those who limit themselves to contacts with others (two out of nine), and have a disability complex. Analysis of the responses showed that, despite the presence of the positive aspects of life, there are also negative - those that can't be left unnoticed. They are: using the technique of self-justification (in seven out of nine cases), conscious existence in the form of inveterate disabled and unwillingness to admit even to themselves their limited capabilities, negative emotions when thinking about life plans, irrational fantasies about bad attitude towards them from healthy people.

In general, studies have confirmed favorable changes in relation to persons with disabilities in society, particularly in the university system. In most cases, students themselves cope with the existing problems. However, some of them definitely needed psychological support to build confidence in their own abilities. Mainly they were students with severe disease, with weak academic preparation, poorly organized. They became the target group of the project. The university classroom that was specially allocated by the Rector, became the center of a group social work. Teachers and students work in harmony.

7. Conclusion

The project activity resulted at the technical university resulted in the establishment of the a community of disabled and non-disabled people, an amateur organization that develops new forms of communication and relationships. One of the last decisions was the establishment of an autonomous nonprofit organization " Integro " together with the Medical University (SSMU).

Creating amateur organizations, research and socio-cultural activities in the university environment promotes students self- potential, the development of tolerance among young people, the formation of a new attitude towards disability. Passivity and weak self-organization of Russian society can be overcome through joint actions and initiatives of people in specific cases, this will rise to a new stage of development, change relationships in society in the spirit of humanism.

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