**II International Scientific and Practical Conference "Individual and Society in the Modern Geopolitical Environment"**

# CREATING CONDITIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFE FOR SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

Margarita V. Pogodaeva (a)*, Olga A. Molokova (b), Julia V. Chepurko (b), Tatyana I. Nikulina (c), Aleksandra V. Sharlanova (d)
*Corresponding author

(a) Irkutsk State University, 6 Nizhniaia Naberezhnaia st., 664011, Irkutsk, Russia, margopog@rambler.ru
(b) Irkutsk State Medical University, 1 Krasnogo Vosstaniia st., 664003, Irkutsk, Russia
(c) Baikal State University, 11 Lenina st., 664003, Irkutsk, Russia
(d) Boarding school for mentally retarded children №1, Irkutsk, Russia

## Abstract

The article considers the problem of creating a psychologically safe environment for children with mental disorders. Psychological safety is a prerequisite for socialization and development for children with special needs and deviations. Identified threats to psychological safety for children with mental disorders in the orphanage. Psychological safety was determined by the emotional well-being of the child, his level of anxiety and the manifestation of aggressiveness, various aspects of his attitude to the environment were analyzed. Methods of pedagogical work to create a psychologically safe environment for children with mental disorders are determined in the classroom with joint creative work with the teacher. In the lesson, children try paper processing technology and also use handmade toys for subject role-playing games. The work with paper influences development of the emotional and strong-willed sphere of the personality, forming a number of positive personal qualities acts as the way of psychological unloading, influences on the development of creative imagination; redound to the development of complete perception of forms, colors; promotes concentration of attention and develops visual memory. Comparing the data obtained at the beginning and during of the research, anxiety level in experimental group considerably decreased, at the same time the psychological comfort of the environment increased.

**Keywords:** Children with special needs, children with disabilities, creativity, psychologically safe, socialization.

## 1. Introduction

At first it is necessary to create in the educational institution such conditions for the socialization and education of children with mental disorders, so that the child can feel physically and psychologically protected. The satisfaction of the requirement for safety provides to the child such mental condition which is made possible his development, real relation to problems and difficulties, lack of fear of independence and, promotes his physical and mental health. The child who feels fear of tutors and teachers or to the other children is not protected from psychological violence and cannot grow up normally. The Russian government provides a complex implementation of social reforms, state programs directed to increase the social security, education, available training, the full medical, social and legal and also social and labor assistance and integration of disabled children into the society. However, among children with mental disorders, not all children are disabled. The statistic of people with this disease is not kept, but they also need some social support and protection. The assistance to these children, their education and training are carried out in Russia mainly in residential care (boarding school) today. At present, the problem of including children with mental disorders in society, the creation of psychological safety conditions for their development and training is especially pointed and far away from permission.

At the same time there is an extensive foreign experience of such activity. Children with mental disabilities are likely to be socially rejected by others. Children with mental disabilities hold themselves in low esteem and attribute their failures to lack of ability and their successes to external forces beyond their control (Bryan & Bryan, 1981). Many policies and initiatives have been developed to improve mental health services for children with learning disabilities.

Socialization and training of children with mental disorders are successfully implemented in Canada inclusive of legislation and policy, contentious issues, Provincial differences, school and classroom practices, teacher education and professional development, and family involvement are outlined (Loreman, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, Alcureini discussed that large amount of resources, time and effort spent by the government on the education of children with mental disabilities has not yet yielded results, despite the fact that conditions and programs have been created to meet the educational needs of students with intellectual disabilities (Alquraini, 2014).

Assistive technology supports students with learning disabilities in terms of access and success in general education and special education settings. This chapter will discuss the challenges students with learning disabilities may face in school and the assistive technology educators can use to help address these challenges (Courtad & Bouck, 2015).

Especial education in China is even behind usual education, but for the last decade the government made considerable efforts for development and improvement of this educational system. At the same time quality of education is low because of the shortage of experts, financing and technologies of special training (Wang & Feng, 2015).

Within decades inclusive education of children with special needs is successfully carried out in England (Mamas & Avramidis, 2013) and the Netherlands (Van der Veen et al., 2010).

At first it is necessary to create in the educational institution such conditions for the socialization and education of children with mental disorders, so that the child can feel physically and psychologically protected. The satisfaction of the requirement for safety provides to the child such mental condition which

is made possible his development, real relation to problems and difficulties, lack of fear of independence and, promotes his physical and mental health. The child who feels fear of tutors and teachers or to the other children is not protected from psychological violence and cannot grow up normally.

## 2. Problem Statement

In especial education there are various approaches to psychological and pedagogical support of children with problems in development. Each approach makes some contribution to a technique of psychological and pedagogical support of children. They are constructed on the accounting of identity and abilities of each child. Support from teaching assistants had a strong negative impact on the academic progress of pupils, and this applied particularly to pupils with a statement of special educational needs (Webster & Blatchford, 2015). Among these are Usanova's (1995) concept about a complex of parallel services; also Mamaychuk's (2001) ideas about a psychological component in pedagogical, diagnostic and social work; and Ulyenkova and Lebedeva's (2005) works about special psychological assistance to children with mental retardation at the early stages of ontogenesis. Threats of psychological safety for children with mental disorders Psychological safety of the personality and psychological safety of the environment was differentiated in works of homeland psychologists.

According to Bayeva (2002), psychological safety of the environment is a condition of education in which there are no expressions of violence, and helps to meet the requirements in personal and confidential communication, creates a reference value for the environment and ensures the mental health of the participants included in it.

Psychological safety is actualized through certain forms of social interactions – jointed activity, person's adaptation to the vital environment, tolerant interaction between participants of interaction (Bayeva, 2002). Loader and Hughes (2017) pay attention that joint education is a potential for the development of tolerance and communication. According to Kovrov (2008), the social environment surrounding the person can be and must promote development behavior's adaptive forms, and provide opportunities and models of person's safe behavior in society. Kodzhaspirova (2008) was considering characteristics of the safe educational environment as a dominant defines such a state in which safety and the satisfaction of all participants are determined by the presence at the subjects organizing educational process and the educational environment, the psychological and pedagogical culture and implementation abilities of technologies of humane pedagogical activity according to the interests of each personality and society in general. The personality of the teacher, his valuable orientations stands on the base of ideological thoughts of pupils; defines their behavior in the present and the future (Donnelly, 2004). Proceeding from the available characteristics, we also understand a psychologically safe educational environment as a condition of safe live activity processes which provides students' life and health and acts as a necessary condition for their development, ensures legal, ecological, social, psychological, information security of pupils, teachers, parents.

The social and psychological component of the educational environment has the greatest impact on psychological safety (children's co-operation or aggression, the comfortable or discomfortable psychological atmosphere in the group, trust or disbelief of children to the teacher, support of children by the teacher in difficult situations). The main threat of psychological safety causing negative experiences is

psychological violence in interpersonal relations. Consequences of psychological violence cause violations in development are shown in the form of depressive and disturbing experiences, affect behavior and interaction with other people, lead to permanent personal changes.

## 3. Research Questions

Based on works concerning a problem of psychological safety of the educational environment, we marked out risk factors of psychological safety for children with mental disabilities in residential care the facility in each of environment components. The social and psychological component include:

- "rejection" of disabled people by society in general, children with mental disorders, in particular;
- aggression in the child relationship with other children and teachers;
- lack of empathy, tolerance from teacher to children, lack of effective psychology and pedagogical support.

The spatial and subject component include:

- quality of physical space;
- spatially isolation of a boarding school from the sociocultural environment of the city, condition of inhabited and school rooms,
- insufficient material and technical support with educational and methodical means.
- degree of conformity of an academic load to psychophysiological learners' opportunities
- lack of opportunities for creative and craft activity,
- lack of motivation to creative activity,
- authoritatively and aggressive teacher's style, lack of individual approach to pupils.

Modern society is still not ready to equal interaction with disabled children. E. Durkheim calls socialization and education "… as the image and similarity of society … imitates it, reproduces it, but does not create it". It is especially topically concerning socialization of disabled children with mental disorder. One of the problems causing psychological vulnerability and low social adaptation of the children with mental disorders living in boarding schools is inefficient psychologically and pedagogically support, or its actual absence, lack of empathy, the tolerant attitude of the teacher towards children, his professional and psychological unavailability to interaction with such children (Sharlanova & Pogodayeva, 2015).

Also there are insufficient teacher understanding of an internal psychological position of the child, the slowed-down reaction to the change of kid's behavior in a difficult situation, difficulties in the choice of optimum strategy and work's tactics.

Children with mental disorders need the special treat from teachers, their attention, understanding and acceptance. This position is qualified by some recognition of the need for more intense and focused teaching for those with SEN (Norwich & Lewis, 2001).

Despite extensive foreign experience, the solution of these questions is ambiguously on practice in the European and American schools. Inclusive education not always gives the expected results. Sometimes big classes and absence of additional teachers only complicate training of other children (Blatchford &

Webster, 2018). The rights of disabled people including the rights of disabled children can conflict to social reforms (Liasidou & Symeou, 2016).

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the experiment is to develop and organize the implementation of a program to increase the psychological safety of the environment for children with mental disorders in a boarding school: protection from psychological violence, reducing aggression, working with emotional experiences and empathy, improving the quality of interpersonal communication through the joint creativity of teachers and students.

## 5. Research Methods

The solution to this problem consisted of several stages: conducting classes with children in the experimental group, consulting parents and legal representatives of children about psychological safety and health; advisory and informational support of the tutors and teachers working in this school for the purpose of development, use the pretext or replace with gerund tolerance and interpersonal communication and empathy.

The experiment was made on the basis of a boarding school No.1 for mentally retarded children. Teachers, the psychologist, 16 children of the experimental group and 16 children of the control group aged from 8 up to 11 years participated in it. All children had mental disorders: disturbance of psychical functions, mental deficiency. In an experiment, we estimated psychological safety of the environment depending on learner emotional health, level of his anxiety and demonstration of aggression. Various relations to the environment and its significant characteristics were analyzed. Lusher test was used for determination of comfort in different situations. Diagnostics of various forms of aggressive behavior was estimated by Baska-Darki test. For uneasiness diagnostics, we used A.M. Prikhozhan projective technique. The used techniques were modified for children' diagnostics with mental disorders.

## 6. Findings

The results of the stating experiment showed the low level of emotional wellbeing, high aggression and anxiety, low security from psychological violence at children with mental disorders in experimental and control groups.

75% of children in the examined groups have mainly negative emotions, vigilance, uneasiness and often aggression. High level of aggression demonstrates that child personal features prevent it to look for more effective interactive methods. Children's negative emotions are mainly caused by mental disorders which are reflected also in emotional spheres. Besides the limited environment of boarding school and inflow of new impressions and emotions are limited to the world of these children. In an emotional condition in control and experimental groups, some reliable distinctions are not revealed.

The organization and carrying out work with children during the forming experiment were based on the following principles: the principle of confidence in a relationship; the principle of the individual

differentiated approach; the principle of respect of norms and values of the personality; the principle of complex use of various methods (Gayazova, 2011).

Forms and methods of work: trainings, group lessons, conversations, discussions.

The aim of the program is to develop children's skills of communication and joint activity and to create conditions of psychological safety in children's group.

The realization of the idea is fulfilled during productive creative activity with the teacher, in groups on 4-5 people. Classes are in a playful way. Children study 3 times in a week, but if they wish, they can come often "to finish" the game or to continue the hand-made things. On lessons we learn how to do animals and objects from the paper in different technics. After making animals, people from paper, we include them in various plots and we discuss their value. On lessons children try the technology of processing the paper and use handmade toys for subject role-playing games. Work with paper acts as the way of psychological unloading; influences on the development of creative imagination; redound to the development of complete perception of forms, colors; promotes concentration of attention and develops visual memory.

The work with paper influences on the development of the emotional and strong-willed sphere of the personality, forming a number of positive personal qualities.

As a result of the carried-out work, the most children (68.75%) of the experimental group have the emotional state which was stabilized and approached to the normal state (CO 10-18), but in the control group there are still some negative emotions, and most children are aggressive. The revealed differences in an emotional state at children of control and experimental groups are reliable.

In experimental group children after carrying out an experiment got rid of manifestations of physical aggression, 87.5% of respondents show indirect aggression, in rare instances verbal aggression, 12.5% show the negativism caused by either sensitivity or irritation. The analysis of diagnostics' results showed that the aggression of children in the control group remained without changes, at 2 teenagers besides indirect aggression also showed physical aggression. 25% of children are not aggressive, or in rare instances show aggression, generally indirect look.

Most of the children (68.75%) of the experimental group have the anxiety level within the standard. 31.25% of children (5 people) showed a high anxiety level. This level negatively correlates with the comfort level. The higher personal anxiety gets in relation to the environment, then less comfortably child feels in this environment. Comparing the data obtained at the beginning of the research and at this stage, anxiety level in experimental group considerably decreased, at the same time the psychological comfort of the environment increased.

In control group the high level of anxiety remained at 75% of children.

The analysis of made experiments' results allows doing the following conclusions: during the experiment children emotional condition improved; aggression level decreased at most of the children; anxiety level considerably decreased; security level from psychological violence at communication with friends slightly increased; security level from psychological violence from adults actually did not change and remained low with a tendency to an average.

## 7. Conclusion

Children with mental disorders more than someone else need adults' attention and care, their love and understanding. As well as other children they want to communicate and play, they can and like to draw, mold, and glue, do simple products. Interaction with adults opens for them the new world. The experiment we made at boarding school for mentally retarded children showed that adults can make the world of these children safer, brighter, and warmer.

Indicators of psychological safety of the environment in residential care facility during the experiment raised that says firstly about the need of involvement of children with mental disorders in joint creative activity, and secondly about the creation of conditions for such activity, inclusion in creative interaction with children teachers, the psychologist, parents and trustees.

## References

Alquraini, T., (2014). Special Education Today in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Advances in Special Education, 28.* https://doi.org/10.1108/S0270-401320140000028023

Bayeva, I. A. (2002). *Psychological Safety in Education.* St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg university.

Blatchford, P., & Webster, R.. (2018). Classroom contexts for learning at primary and secondary school:

Class size, groupings, interactions and special educational needs. *British Educational Research Journal, 44,* 681-703. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3454

Bryan, T. E., & Bryan J. (1981). Some personal and social experiences of learning disabled children. *Advances in Special Education, 3,* 147-186.

Courtad, C. A., & Bouck, E. (2015). Assistive Technology for Students with Learning Disabilities. *Advances in Special Education, 25,* 153-173. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0270-4013(2013)0000025011

Donnelly, C. (2004). Constructing the ethos of tolerance and respect in an integrated school: the role of teachers. *British Educational Research Journal, 30,* 263-268. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192042000195254

Gayazova, L. A. (2011). Ensuring complex safety of the educational environment and its psychological maintenance. *News of the Russian State Pedagogical University of A.I. Herzen, 142,* 27-33.

Kodzhaspirova, G. M. (2008). *Psychology and Pedagogical Culture of the Teacher as Leading Factor of Safety of the Educational Environment. Safety of The Educational Environment.* Ekon-Inform.

Kovrov, V. V. (2008). *Creation of Model of psychologically safe educational environment on the MGPPU experimental platforms. Safety of the educational environment.* Ekon-Inform.

Liasidou, A., & Symeou, L. (2016). Neoliberal versus social justice reforms in education policy and practice: discourses, politics and disability rights in education. *Critical Studies in Education. 57*(3). https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1186102

Loader, R., & Hughes, J. (2017). Balancing Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion in Education: The Potential of Shared Education in Divided Contexts. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 65*(3).

Loreman, T. (2014). Special Education Today in Canada. *Advances in Special Education, 28,* 33-60. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0270-401320140000028008

Mamas, C., & Avramidis, E. (2013). Promoting social interaction in the inclusive classroom: Lessons from inclusive schools in England and Cyprus. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction, 2,* 217.

Mamaychuk, I. I. (2001). *Psychological Assistance to Children with Problems in Development.* Speech.

Norwich, B., & Lewis, A. (2001). Mapping a Pedagogy for Special Educational Needs. *British Educational Research Journal, 27*(3), 313-330. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192012004832

Sharlanova, A. V., & Pogodayeva, M. V. (2015). Design of the available educational environment for children with limited opportunities of health in institutions of additional education. *Humanitarian Scientific Researches, 11.* http://human.snauka.ru/2015/11/13367

Ulyenkova, U. V., & Lebedeva, O. V. (2005). Organization and the content of special psychological assistance to children with problems in development. Academy.

Usanova, O. N., (1995). *Children with Problems of Mental Development.* Moscow.

Van der Veen, I., Smeets, E., & Mechtild, D. (2010). Children with special educational needs in the Netherlands: number, characteristics and school career. *Educational Research, 52*(1), 15-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881003588147

Wang, M., & Feng, Y. (2015). Special Education Today in China. *Advances in Special Education, 28,* 663-688. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0270-401320140000028030

Webster, R., & Blatchford, P. (2015). Worlds apart? The nature and quality of the educational experiences of pupils with a statement for special educational needs in mainstream primary schools. *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(2), 324-342.