

## Creation of the Center for Inclusive Education as an Innovative Project of College Development in the Field of Inclusive Education

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**Present article explores the questions of organizing inclusive education in the conditions of higher professional education system functioning. It analyzes the international experience in introducing inclusive education into the higher education system. We studied the problems of introducing inclusive education in college. Based on the results of the study, we conclude that it is necessary to create a Center for Inclusive Education in college. We propose the main possible areas of Center's expertise, its structure and required resources.**

**Key words:** Inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive learning, abnormal psychophysical development, Center for Inclusive Education.

Current educational system in any country is generally oriented at the global tendencies in this area, which are defined by the international social institutes (UNESCO, UN). This leads to the changes in educational systems of most of the developed countries towards their openness and mobility. It is necessary to point out that the main requirement to the contemporary educational process is its flexibility, which provides the need of learning in all people without exceptions. The current goal of an educational organization is to provide help and support to all students without letting them be excluded from the social life and without them being treated as socially invaluable.

Because of this, at the present stage of social and economic development of Dagestan it is relevant to define new goals and values of higher

education, which would provide the actualization of democratic, humanistic and fair principles, as well as the individual approach towards all of the participants in educational process, especially towards young people with psychophysical development abnormalities (PDA).

Currently, medical and economical models, which define disability as an individual pathology (medical model), or as functional limitations and working incapacity (economical model), are replaced with the new comprehension of disability (social model). According to this latest model, social conditions (society culture, psychological climate and social organization), in which the person with weakened health works, narrow the opportunity for his self-actualization. Inclusion proposes defining disability as a difference, which affects the personality activity but which is not its defect or flaw; it also suggests creating an inclusive society, which respects and values a person's differences<sup>1</sup>.

The term "inclusion" means a more

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effective integration of people with PDA in the educational environment and in social life, equal availability of obtaining high-quality education, and opportunity for professional growth and self-actualization with regard to their abilities and needs. It is necessary to create such educational system, which would guarantee the realization of all above-mentioned principles. An example of such system is the inclusive education (IE) system - a process of providing educational services to young people with PDA, which provides to their right of obtaining higher education with the creation of the conditions, adapted for their needs and abilities, in colleges. The goal of IE is to change the approach towards young people with PDA and the attitude towards them.

A part of the IE is inclusive learning. Inclusive learning of the students with PDA is a way for them to obtain higher education in the process of joint learning with the healthy students in conditions of college's adaptation to the abilities and needs of students with PDA.

One of the effective methods of realizing inclusive learning is the use of transdisciplinary scientific approach Informing Science (IS), which addresses the problems of integrating informational sciences and educational process in dependence from the characteristics of information recipient (client). Transdisciplinary approach IS provides an opportunity to solve the problems of integral information distribution for the students with PDA. In this configuration the informational resources of separate disciplines are not considered as secondary parts (merely an informational material, which creates the whole), but as a parts, which gain new meanings and senses by being in an integral structure<sup>2,3</sup>.

Upon following the recommendations of International Salamanca Conference and Universal Declaration of Education for All, which state that inclusion is one of the main ways to reach the goal of obtaining education by people with special needs, many countries in the world reformed special and inclusive education in the last decades<sup>4,5</sup>.

The problem of higher education for youth with special needs came into focus of attention in the countries abroad by the end of the 1980s. It gradually shifted the accents from the problems of academic performance to the use of flexible technologies and to definition and solving

of various needs in the process of educating students with PDA<sup>6</sup>.

Some studies among the scientific literature on the problems of higher education for youth with special needs address the most significant achievements in the area of working with prospective and actual students with PDA.

For example, in our opinion, the experience of University of Karlsruhe (Germany), which has specially created Center for students with special needs, is highly positive. This functional division of the University defines the applicants' level of qualification for learning, conducts professional orientation, provides necessary consultations, conducts interviews, assists in adaptation to student life and in overcoming possible difficulties and informs about individual technical means of learning and the opportunities of getting them. It is important to note that the University begins working with the high-school students two years prior to their graduation. It is provided by the "school – university" system, according to which the Center specialists give lectures in schools, providing information about the University, conduct Doors Open Days and organize "round table" discussions about the problems of studying at the University<sup>7</sup>.

In the USA providing special conditions for students with PDA college education is the responsibility of Office of Special Education Programs. The Office staff includes regular employees, who organize special learning conditions, and temporary workers, who provide the direct services for creating special conditions. Each of the regular employees has a certain area of expertise (adaptation of exams, development and use of supporting technologies) or works with a certain category of students with PDA (if the college has more than 1000 students with PDA enrolled). Temporary workers act as sign language interpreters, who assist with reading and rewriting. Office of Special Education Programs creates special conditions for students with PDA by providing the services or assisting in services provision by other college units<sup>8</sup>.

Among Russian colleges a certain experience in teaching youth with PDA belongs to Saratov State Technical University and to Chelyabinsk State University, which has a Regional

Center for Education of Handicapped People, which prepares the future students. After the successful passing of graduation exams the students are enrolled in the common student groups, where they study upon equal conditions. The Center has the necessary technical means of studying. It has a multimedia computer educational classroom, connected to the Internet; it has computers with speech composers and voice recorders. The students are provided with complete lecture transcripts on audiotapes and with multiple multimedia courses and textbooks<sup>9</sup>.

The global experience in general demonstrates that students with PDA can successfully integrate in such educational space and can reach high educational results. IE is an effective mean, which provides solidarity between subjects of education. Creating by IE an educational environment, which motivates students with PDA to obtain the necessary experience, stimulates mutual understanding and social interaction; it also becomes more individual-oriented and plays the role of a safe space.

In the opinion of the scientists, higher education of the students with PDA generally develops in two directions. In the first one the student with PDA in college has a position of a usual student, along with all of the positive and negative consequences. Positive sides of such position mostly generate from the fact that, in this case, such students get the same attitude as the rest of the students, which means the true equality and respect towards the human integrity. However, many students with PDA in this situation become excluded from the education process because of the educational space maladjustment to their needs.

In the second case the student with PDA in college not only has a position of a usual student, but also a position of a disabled person. This reflects in the planning of educational activity, in teaching methods, the amount of study load, specifics of college timetable and, most importantly, in the services and devices of college educational environment, which provide the student with PDA with the opportunity to obtain learning skills and activities in the appropriate educational environment, to move around campus without obstacles and to have access to special devices and library resources<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, the concept of inclusion in

education is much larger than simple integration of educational environment, which is related to the fact that students with PDA obtain their education in regular colleges and the educational process itself is created with regard to strengths, weaknesses and abilities of the students. Moreover, the main requirement of the IE is that all of the students are learning together, regardless of the differences between them.

Applying the IE principles in college would have a positive impact not only on the students with PDA, but also on the healthy students, providing them with the opportunity to better appreciate the potential, given to them by nature. Daily contacts with people with PDA help expanding the social experience and, possibly, even life-philosophy borders of the regular students. With the correctly developed pedagogic situation this experience might become a basis for real personal growth. Thus, the presence of a student with PDA in a regular student group becomes a condition, which helps peers' personal growth.

In this context, the concern of pedagogic community representatives becomes the creation of a special emotional and cognitive mindset towards it: it should not contain regret, but rather care, empathy, sensitive and polite interaction with such student, on the one hand, and perception him as an equal member of the group, on the other hand.

Inviting people with PDA to colleges implies positive influence on a wide range of their close people – parents and other family members. Integrating of a young person into the group of his peers may help gradually change the psychological state of his parents, as well – it may relieve the tension, improve the emotional state, make educational, rehabilitation an correction work more effective. Active, motivated, value-oriented and pedagogically controlled participation of the parents in the education process would become the reason for lowering their anxieties and fears, activating their resources for daily and perspective striving to success and restructuring the mindset of the whole family and its close people.

Working with student groups in inclusive education process provides new invaluable impulse for teacher's self-improvement and becomes a condition for developing sincere,

democratic relationships and prevents any kind of rudeness by not letting the internal destructive forces to express.

A teacher, who works in inclusive groups, will be able to expand his knowledge about the children development patterns and to master new methodic approaches. Working in inclusive educational space develops a new understanding on students with PDA, explains the strategy and tactics of psychological and pedagogic support of such people. Moreover, a teacher assesses the abilities and capacity of the healthy students from a different perspective; he sees new ways of upbringing a personality and compensating a student's problem areas<sup>11</sup>.

### METHOD

Present study was conducted in order to define the main directions of IE system development in Dagestan colleges and, in particular, in the area of assisting the educational and professional settlement of young people with PDA.

The first part of the study consisted of a questionnaire of the college teachers, defining their loyalty towards the students with PDA, the level of educational environment availability, the range of popular specialties, the optimal forms of teaching the students with PDA, in their opinion, as well as the means, by which colleges can guarantee that people with PDA can obtain higher professional education.

The second part of the study consisted of a questionnaire of the students with PDA themselves in order to discover the problems and educational needs of this student category.

### RESULTS

Based on the results of the questionnaire of college teaching staff it can be concluded that the majority of teachers (76%) have a positive attitude towards the prospective increase of the number of students with PDA; they think that anyone, who is able to self-educate, can obtain college education. More than half of the respondents connected this direction of education policy with the principles of actualizing personal rights and freedom, social integrity and

humanization of social relationships. These principles are aimed at providing necessary conditions for actual material independence of people with limited abilities.

Factors of teachers' attitude towards IE introduction can generally be divided in two groups – external and internal factors. External factors include availability of college supplies, availability of special programs and didactic material, as well as the teachers' involvement in the inclusive process and their experience in working with students of this category.

Internal factors are the level of teacher's self-actualization, flexibility in communication, ability to discover oneself and the absence of social stereotypes, empathy level and certain characteristics of their attitude towards the students.

However, in the opinion of college teaching staff, there are certain groups of factors, which become the obstacles in the inclusion of young people with PDA in the process of obtaining higher education.

Firstly, it is the low availability of college educational space. Thorough discussion of this problem showed that more than the half of the teachers supposes that their departments lack the necessary conditions for teaching students with PDA (only 30% of the respondents talk about the possibility of teaching students with PDA). In their opinion, solving this problem requires a significant amount of work in the field of restructuring buildings with regard to the needs of students with PDA (30%) and of providing material and technical conditions for educational process (14%).

Secondly, the respondents noted the necessity of conducting wide medical, social, psychological and pedagogic support of this student category. The factors of this group include the need to involve special workers, including tutors (17%), organization of special medical rooms (13%), and organizational, methodic and technological support of the education process (33%).

Thirdly, the teachers noted the insufficient level of preparation for higher education in prospective students with PDA and the presence of certain cognitive barriers. The respondents stated that present general education schools do not fully prepare the students with PDA

for applying to colleges (39%). Moreover, part of the teachers mentioned the lack of readiness to help the students with PDA with the application process and further professional self-identity by their parents (20%). Another factor was inadequate aspirations about higher education in prospective students with PDA themselves.

Fourthly, there are social and psychological barriers. In the teachers' opinion, most of the students with PDA are not psychologically ready to study at the equal conditions with the other students (43%). They noted low rates of prospective employment of graduates with PDA (45%), which, in our opinion, are related to existing social stereotypes about students' with PDA inability to find a job after graduating college. In such interpretation when social and psychological barriers are considered to be the main obstacles for educating young people with PDA in college, it is necessary to provide addressed support to the students on a systemic level. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that most of the prospective students with PDA, who plan to go to college, have an experience in integrated education, which decreases the fears and concerns about future communications in student groups and increases their confidence about the availability of educational material.

As a result of the questionnaire of students with PDA we defined the following problems, which the students of this category encounter during education process:

1. Absence of the law about inclusive education in colleges does not allow fully actualizing the rights of people with PDA to obtain high-quality higher education with regard to their abilities and needs;
2. Insufficient methodic and technical support of the educational process of students with PDA;
3. Insufficient level of colleges preparation for working with students with PDA;
4. Lack of a single database of students with PDA, who study in college, and also the lack of educational material in an adapted form;
5. Lack of special equipment and voiced software.

As the possible ways to solve these problems the students with PDA proposed:

- 1) Developing scientific and methodic support of inclusive education of students with sight deficits in the conditions of college;
- 2) Creating technical base, which would include special equipment and software (interactive screens, scanning machines, etc.);
- 3) Monitoring the number of students with pda and creating a single statistical database about this student category and their nosology;
- 4) Conducting seminars about the characteristics of inclusive education of students with pda for the college teachers;
- 5) Creating a barrier-free environment in college;
- 6) Conducting classes about these students' orientation in college environment;
- 7) Adapting educational material to the needs and ability of the aforementioned student category.

Present study about the problems of inclusive education of students with PDA demonstrates that it is necessary to expand and develop intra-college documents and to actualize the practical means for providing the availability of necessary didactic materials to the students with PDA by the college directors.

In order to solve these problems and to create the conditions for successful education of students with PDA it is necessary to combine theory and practice, which would be provided by the main principles of inclusive education. Combining theoretical knowledge from the educational process and practical skills from applying this knowledge can be made possible by the creation and activity of the Centers for teaching students with PDA in the colleges of the country.

In the questionnaire more than 80% of students with PDA stated a wish to use the educational and informational services of such Center in their college. Also, because by obtaining higher education the students with PDA gain a real opportunity to actualize their intellectual potential and become more competitive on the present job market, it is necessary to define the most promising professions for this student category (to create a database of professions) with regard to their abilities and needs, to use the existing programs of their professional preparation

and to integrate the international experience in working with this student category.

### DISCUSSION

Analysis of the literature and the conducted study provided the basis for developing and practically using the rational directions of inclusive orientation work in college. In order to organize and coordinate the activity of the staff during the integration of inclusive education in the college structure, it is necessary to create a Center for Inclusive Education.

The main possible directions of the Center for Inclusive Education activity have to be:

1. Creation of the material and technical background for providing IE process in college;
2. Scientific and methodic support of the IE process;
3. Analysis, adaptation, integration and realization of the psychological and pedagogic technology and methods for the subjects of IE process in college;
4. Development, adaptation and integration of educational programs and individual study plans for students with PDA; increasing the qualifications of teachers, involved in the IE process;
5. Development and integration of monitoring technologies for the analysis of IE process development in college;
6. Analysis, synthesis and sharing the experience of IE in the region; making contact and sharing the information with the organizations related to the problems of educating students with PDA;
7. Organization, conduction and participation in the scientific and methodologic conferences and seminars, as well as publication of the results of the studies and Center activity in various printed and Web issues;
8. Organization of events, aimed at developing the IE in college.

Typical structure of the Center for Inclusive Education should contain: classrooms for students with severe locomotor system, sight and hearing deficits, the unit of physical rehabilitation with the facilities for providing a wide

range of recreational and rehabilitation services (exercise therapy, massage, laser-, ultrasound- and magnetic-therapy, etc.), specially adjusted bathroom for people in wheelchairs, special work places for students with sight and locomotor deficits in the library, resources room, which would provide the students with individual and communal technical learning devices (earphones and FM-systems for the students with hearing deficits, hearing and speech trainer for the students with speech deficits, magnifying lenses, lenses with backlight, lenses for looking at maps and pictures, television magnifiers for reading, electronic lenses, Braille tactile writing system for the students with sight deficits).

The Center staff should include a regular Center director, who would guide and analyze its activity, a vice-director, who would work with the participants of the educational process, and a coordinator of the relations of students and prospective students with PDA with the Center for Inclusive Education.

Center for Inclusive Education specialists should be selected from the most experienced teachers, who: regularly work at the college departments, participate in expanding inclusive competency of the participants of college education process, write educational and methodic documentation on inclusive education, provide the participation of specialized departments teachers in the professional orientation and application preparation of students with PDA and providing the necessary rehabilitation services to prospective students and students, based in their activity profile.

During the process of individual work the Center for Inclusive Education staff find out, if the students with PDA have learning difficulties, they assess the students' psychological state, needs in supportive means of education or study plans modification, their learning motivation, self-requirements and satisfaction with the obtained knowledge.

Specialists of the Center interact as a professional team, which solves separate problems by the specialists in various areas and proposes a generalized solution about forms and methods of social and pedagogic work and the contents of individual support programs for students with PDA.

The Center for Inclusive Education would need the following resources to solve the tasks of the project:

1. Personnel resources: module programs, aimed at preparing the specialists in the IE field, a place of internship in the college IE, proficiency courses, effective system of educating and consulting teachers of IE;
2. Scientific resources: development of scientific schools, conducting interdisciplinary studies of IE;
3. Informational resources: a system of operative information providing for the IE subjects, informational and methodic resources for inclusion subjects;
4. Organizational resources: mechanisms of inclusive education organizing and their program and methodic support;
5. Social and adaptation resources: creating the inclusive education community in the space of a contemporary educational facility, a system of interaction with the parents and the society;
6. Methodic resources: educational and methodic literature;
7. Analytical and diagnostic resources: psychological and pedagogic monitoring, database of diagnostic methods;
8. Programs and distance-education resources: supporting the activity of the Web teacher, organizing webinars, Skype-communication and electronic education.

Another significant direction in the Center's activity in context of including the students with PDA in active student life is organizing a systematic independent scientific work for the students with different levels of development, preparing the best student works for the presentation in the inter-university scientific conferences, organizing the work of a social and psychological consultation room.

The Center also involves students with PDA in the student self-management, in organizing the festivities, game programs, leisure time, festivals, exhibitions and creative contests. It provides the development of creative skills and aesthetic favors and preferences in the students of the aforementioned category. They participate in developing amateur performances, hosting student parties, markets, auctions, contests,

various student holidays; they organize interaction with the parents, conducting seminars and discussions, etc.

Center for Inclusive Education, if it has pedagogic, psychological and social support from the college directors, can assist a student with PDA in reaching high individual grades of personal development, in understanding the value of this development for a person's lifestyle, for functional significance in the process of integration in the society and for the ability to get a worthy place in it.

### CONCLUSION

In a wide sense, inclusion is a system, which contains a number of interconnected processes and allows each individual actively participating in the social life with regard to their wishes, needs and varieties. By accepting inclusion, the society accepts the whole variability of the world and the people with special needs (not only with PDA). Inclusive approach to a student with PDA means understanding his limited abilities, accepting him, as he is, being sensitive to his problems and respectful to his personality.

Introducing inclusive learning in the higher education system is a significant factor of the society development. It implies the availability of college education to young people with PDA, as well as the creation of adaptive conditions of educational process for the special needs of this student group. In order to fully actualize the ideas of inclusion it is not enough to have law reforms, it is also necessary to gain complete understanding from the society and the teachers.

Inclusive education implies the creation of a certain educational space, the provision of scientific, psychological and pedagogic assistance, creation of study programs, adapted to the abilities and needs of students with PDA, including the use of the achievements of transdisciplinary scientific approach Informing Science. The main direction of professional training of the specialists is providing equal opportunities in the process of personality-oriented education.

In this case, by viewing the IS transdisciplinary approach as one of the opportunities for creating a new type of knowledge for the students with PDA, it is important to note

that the value of transdisciplinary education experience lies within the ability to see the new problems in the conventional and the obvious.

However, inclusive education is not a complete alternative for the special education, but it significantly broadens the opportunities of the latter. Educational facilities with inclusive education should work in close connection with the special educational institutions, using well-known methods of working with people of a certain nosology, involving experienced specialists in the consulting process with this category of people.

During the development of educational and methodic resources of inclusive education it is necessary to use the experience of the countries, which succeeded in it, and to adapt this experience to Dagestan reality. It is also necessary to develop tolerant attitude towards people with PDA in the society, for example, by using mass-media.

Thus, solving the problems of inclusive college education of students with PDA requires the creation of Center for Inclusive Education and practical actualization of a certain events. Creating a unit for working with prospective students and students with PDA in inclusive-oriented colleges is a significant and necessary condition for optimal organization of social and pedagogic work and effective integration of inclusive education.

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