Improving the Health of Children with Special Needs During the Implementation of the Programme of Social and Educational Support

Valentyn TESLENKO¹

¹National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Kyiv, Ukraine, teslenkovalentin@ukr.net

Abstract: As indicated by the concept of a 21st-century education, the system of education is enhanced by the principles of humanization and individualization, which takes into consideration the personal and psychophysical characteristics of children and creates educational conditions facilitating timely and comprehensive development of all aspects of the child's personality. The research aims to develop theoretical foundations and technologies of social and educational support for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs in the industrial region. The regional programme of social and pedagogical support of children with special needs, suggested by this research, is based on the idea of targeted orientation and complexity of social and educational assistance to every child with psychophysical problems. The control (CG) and experimental (EG) groups, involving 2470 and 2485 respondents respectively, were formed following such parameters as age, place of residence, type of educational institution, etc. It is found that the levels of life competency in the EG have increased more than in the CG. Many years of experience in the experimental organization of social and educational support for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs makes it possible to conclude that timely and early social and educational support is a priority area in the development of life competency in children with psychophysical problems since it benefits from the capacities of the industrial region, creates a favourable rehabilitation environment and takes into account the most productive age for the rehabilitation and social adaptation.

Keywords: *rehabilitation; socialization; development programmes; social adaptation; Donbas.*

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Introduction

The importance of this mission today is caused by the increasing number of children with different disorders of physical and mental health. The appeal of the general public (scientists, educators, public figures et al.) to this problem is due to the fact that children with special needs in a democratic society should be involved in socio-cultural processes, the economic life of society and human relations. They have the same rights and freedoms as other members of society and, therefore, they must have the necessary life experience and also perceive, evaluate and creatively use material and cultural assets.

The analysis of scientific literature shows that the broad context of the research problem is characterized by pronounced interdisciplinarity since it accumulates scientific knowledge about general, social psychology and pedagogy (Bezpalko, 2003; Behas, 2019; Bezliudnyi et al., 2019; Byvalkevych, Yefremova, & Hryshchenko 2020; Makoviichuk et al., 2020; Gerasymova et al., 2019; Kapska, Bezpalko, & Vainola, 2001; Kharchenko, Kratinov, & Vakhovskiy, 2002; Koziuk et al., 2020; Liashenko, 2005; Melnyk et al., 2019; Sebalo & Teslenko, 2020; Sheremet et al., 2019; Sitovskiy et al., 2019; Zvierieva, 1999). In a pedagogical context, the most comprehensive and in-depth knowledge about theory and practice of working with children with developmental disorders is incorporated in special pedagogy, which studies theory and practice of special education for people with special needs (Bondar, 2003; Khokhlina, 2003; Sheremet, 1997 et al.).

Their practical implementation greatly expands the possibilities of differentiation and individualization of education, rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs. However, the situation is compounded by the fact that the existing state system, operating through a network of specialized institutions of various types, covers only about 20 per cent of children with special needs, while still being an updated but closed system, which significantly reduces its socializing value. In turn, this causes the need to elaborate some effective forms of rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs due to the ever-increasing socio-economic and educational potential. These forms should have the character of social and educational support and satisfy the needs of a considerable part of children with certain psychophysical problems.

The main principles of the research concept are reflected in **the research hypothesis**, which is based on the assumption that social and educational support for children with special needs can be successful if a) it relies on a regional model of this process as a scientific and theoretical basis,

which ensures its effective organization; b) a regional comprehensive programme of social and educational support for children with special needs is developed and implemented; c) the mechanisms for implementing the programme of social and educational support are based on the principle of integration of socio-economic and educational capacities of the industrial region and interaction between different specialists and the public under the supervision of a social educator; d) the selection and use of forms and methods of social and educational support is based on an anthropocentric approach and takes into account the need to enhance the development, self-realization and self-improvement of children with special needs. **The research aims** to develop theoretical foundations and technologies of social and educational support for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs in the industrial region.

Materials & methods

The experimental work involved the children with special needs living in Donbas (4955 respondents in total). The control (CG) and experimental (EG) groups, involving 2470 and 2485 respondents respectively, were formed following such parameters as age, place of residence, type of educational institution, etc.

The process of conducting this research adheres to relevant ethical rules. First of all, all ethical requirements were considered before the implementation of this research. Next, the authors of the research obtained approval from the ethical committee of the university. After that, the respondents were informed about both the goals and objectives of the research and were interviewed. Moreover, they were assured that the participation in the research was voluntary, and they were entitled to quit it at any time so that they should not feel under pressure.

Research methods include different pedagogical, psychological and sociological methods: theoretical methods – a comparative historical analysis of national and international sources on the problem of social and pedagogical support of children with special needs, their rehabilitation and social adaptation, a personality-oriented approach in social and general pedagogy to study key theoretical problems; various types of analysis of socio-pedagogical activity as a socio-pedagogical phenomenon (gnoseological, sequential, systemic, contextual), an interdisciplinary synthesis and modelling of rehabilitation and social adaptation to reveal the essential features of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs; a theoretical generalization, systematization of the obtained results,

conceptualization of the leading ideas to create the theory of social and pedagogical support of children with special needs; a study of the national and international experience of social and pedagogical support of children with special needs, designing of social and pedagogical technologies ensuring rehabilitation and social adaptation, elaboration of a programme of experimental and pedagogical work to verify the main theoretical positions; empirical methods – a pedagogical experiment, a pedagogical monitoring for developing technologies of social and pedagogical support, a pedagogical observation, including participant observations, conversations, interviews, questionnaires, ratings, self-assessment, expert assessment to determine the level of rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs, a pedagogical diagnostics, mathematical statistics, a retrospective analysis of the author's working experience in the positions of teacher, headmaster, head of the department of education and science of Donetsk Regional State Administration to collect primary analytical material and conduct an experimental verification of hypothetical assumptions.

The results of experimental studies were processed with mathematical statistics methods, including Student's t-test for independent samples, Pearson correlation analysis, Fisher's transformation for dependent samples, calculation of mean values and standard deviation. The obtained results were mathematically processed with MS Excel and SPSS.

This research also employs the expert assessment method. A group of 25 experts (researchers, social educators, specialists in correctional pedagogy, psychologists, teachers) was formed. They positively assess the effectiveness of the regional system of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs. Also, they indicate some qualitative changes in vital competency of children with special needs during the five years of the study (a transition from unsatisfactory to satisfactory positions – on average 60% of respondents).

At the same time, Kendall's coefficient of concordance as for the consensus of experts, calculated based on the standard methodology, was equal to 0.92 (Buyul, & Zefel, 2002).

The research also uses a certain toolset for solving problems for children with special needs, including:

- 1) The House–Tree–Person technique (J. Buck) used to study individuals with special needs and the level of their communication with others (Mash, & Barkley, 1998).
- 2) The Zung Self Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965).
- 3) The express diagnostics of self-esteem (Rubinstein, 2010).

4) Cattell's personality factors test (1949) used to identify personal problems of children with special needs to solve them (Batarashev, 2004).

5) Guilford's psychometric study of social intelligence (Guilford, 1967).

During the formative experiment, a regional programme of social and educational support for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs was implemented. It included the creation of certain socio-economic and pedagogical conditions in Donbas.

For the five years (2014-2019) on the basis of the Donetsk Region educational system, the main principles of the developed concept of social and educational support have been tested and experimentally verified; the influence of the regional system of social and pedagogical support on the rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs, as well as the development of their life competency have been studied; the influence of the rehabilitation on the correction or reduction of psychophysical disorders and the enrichment of life experience of children with special needs have been analyzed.

In the course of the experiment, the dynamics of changes in the health of children with special needs has been studied using a regional system of social and educational support. For this purpose, the authors of the article have developed and practically implemented a regional system of personal record-keeping. It must be noted that the concept of **health condition** *in this research takes into account not only a physical but also social condition, that is, all the components affecting life competency of children with psychophysical problems. Relevant social components (a social status of the family, the child's ability to develop fine motor skills, speech, social and emotional development, self-care skills, gross motor skills, cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, thinking, etc.) have been studied along with the determination of physiological factors in the nosological structure of children with special needs, which influences the creation and course of rehabilitation.*

The baseline levels of life competency development in children with special needs have been determined during the initial examination by the regional personal record-keeping system and the monitoring system during the experiment. These levels were not constant since children with psychophysical problems attempted to improve themselves and increase their level of life competency during individual rehabilitation and social adaptation programmes.

During the formative experiment, some individual components of the development of children with special needs have been analyzed. Such analysis was conducted based on a developed set of criteria, each of which

reflected different aspects of the development of children's life competency. **These criteria include** perception and fine motor skills, cognitive development, language and speech development, social and emotional development, self-care skills and gross motor skills development. Also, the type of psychophysical problems has been taken into account.

The regional programme of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs, suggested by this research, is based on the idea of targeted orientation and complexity of social and educational assistance to every child with psychophysical problems. Thus, the experimenters focused not on the use of different measures and means but their holistic complex with the care of a particular child. Moreover, such a system has been implemented at three **organizational levels**, namely, regional, city (district) and school ones.

Having determined the basic general characteristics of the programme, the experimenters proceeded to the description of its substantive aspect. **The main objectives** in accordance with the goals and essential characteristics of **the programme** have been defined as follows: providing targeted medical and financial assistance to children with special needs; creating appropriate conditions for the maintenance, learning, education and comprehensive development of children with special needs in general and special educational institutions and at home; providing comprehensive support and informational, social, legal, psychological and pedagogical support to children with psychophysical problems; developing creative skills of children and adolescents with physical and mental problems, organizing their treatment and rehabilitation; promoting the employment of children with special needs, creating an extensive regional system of vocational training and higher education for such children; creating appropriate information databases of children with special needs and their conditions; organizing effective psychological, medical and pedagogical consultations for timely examination of the relevant categories of children and providing them and their parents with professional advice.

The content of social and educational support for children with special needs has been built According to the aim and objectives of the programme. **The content of activities** was grouped following such main sectors: 1. Socio-pedagogical activities of performers of social and educational support for children with special needs in the context of providing them with appropriate education and training. 2. Creating conditions for maintaining health and rehabilitation of psychophysical problems. 3. Promoting the realization of the professional and economic interests of children with special needs. 4. Creation certain conditions for the

realization of creative and spiritual interests of children with special needs. 5. Ensuring cultural interests and meaningful leisure activities for children with special needs. 6. Promoting the participation of children and young people with special needs in the public and socio-political life of the region, the state.

The content of social and educational support has been influenced by taking into account the place of rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs (at home, in a comprehensive school or in a special educational institution), as well as his / her location (a big city, a small town, rural areas, etc.)

In addition, the content has been monitored in each sector based on **the three general areas**: the creation of conditions and guarantees for treatment, education, rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs; treatment, education, rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with psychophysical problems; providing mechanisms for implementing the regional system of social and educational support for children with special needs.

Technologically, the regional programme for children with special needs has been implemented through the development of certain individual development programmes for each child with special needs, as well as the corresponding targeted programmes of social and educational support. These programmes were accorded with the level of use. There were four such **levels**: 1) the family level; 2) the level of the educational institution; 3) the city (district) level; 4) the regional level.

An individual programme for the development of each child with special needs has been developed by the child (if healthy enough), his/her parents, as well as the corresponding specialists such as teachers, psychologists, speech pathologists, doctors. An individual targeted comprehensive programme of social and educational support for children with special needs has been developed by all performers of social and educational support under the supervision of local executive committees of the industrial region.

The regional programme of social and educational support for children with special needs consisted of **certain stages**.

The first stage is diagnostics and organization. It includes a comprehensive initial and then annual recurrent psychological and pedagogical diagnostics of a child with special needs and a study of the requests and plans of the child and his/her parents. After that, the socio-pedagogical situation of a child with special needs is analyzed and the capacities of all performers of social and educational support are studied.

The determination of the leading segment among the performers of social and educational support turned out to be rather complicated. For the most part, it is a local executive authority or its education department. This stage is completed by the development of complementary programmes: the individual programme for the development of the child with special needs and the corresponding programme of social and educational support of the child with special needs.

The second stage involves all personal social and educational work on the implementation of the programmes. To this end, the basic principles of activities organization are formulated for each particular case; the priority of areas in social and educational work is determined; its specific content is formed according to the defined sectors (each time it may be different, or rather individual). It is also necessary to choose the place where the rehabilitation and social adaptation of the child with psychophysical problems should take place: at the place of parents' residence (at a secondary school or home) or in a special educational institution. One should also organize some activities for children and their parents. It must be noted that a version of social and educational rehabilitation activities and appropriate support from adults and organizations is created for each child individually.

At the third stage of the child's social integration into society, it is important to solve the issue of his/her post-school education and employment. In an industrial region, there are more opportunities to address such issues than in other localities. The state and the region provide different benefits and additional conditions of study at universities, as well as in vocational education institutions.

During the development of the programme, the authors assumed that the main role in its direct development and implementation belongs to education authorities (departments) and teaching teams of educational institutions, and all the actions of performers of social and educational support are coordinated by the executive committees of cities, districts. This approach allows one to set clear objectives for each performer of social and educational support, as well as for children with special needs and their parents.

Based on the regional targeted and integrated programme, appropriate programmes have been developed at the level of each city, district and educational institution within a specified period. Such programmes primarily involved creating full **databases** of children with psychophysical problems by types, disorders, etc. This classification of children with special needs allows one to analyze the existing situation and plan the volume and nature of social and educational support and medical

care. However, the executive committee had the right to say the last decisive word on determining the best option for social rehabilitation (it will be carried out in a family or a comprehensive school or a special educational institution, e.g. boarding school). The issues of annual in-depth medical examination of children with special needs, as well as their annual rehabilitation on preferential terms, have also been addressed with the active participation of the executive committees.

The committees and teaching teams also played their role in creating a complex of conditions for pre-professional employment of children with special needs. For this purpose, the capacities of training centres at enterprises and training aids supply of vocational and higher education institutions were widely used. As the network of these enterprises and educational institutions in Donbas is branched out and located in almost all corners of the region, the authors have managed to reach every child with special needs in creating conditions for their professional training and employment.

City and district education departments have paid special attention to elaborating individual programmes for the development of each child with special needs, improving the technical, organizational and methodological base for ensuring real access of children with special needs to all forms and levels of education in the city or district.

Certain ongoing workshops on relevant topics were planned and conducted for teaching staff of special boarding schools and general preschool, school and out-of-school institutions. Relevant scientific and methodological materials were compiled. Also, a comprehensive network of experimental sites for pressing issues of social and educational support for children with special needs was created. Professional, creative and cultural needs of children with special needs and their level of readiness to integrate into society were monitored, too.

Teaching teams of comprehensive schools harmonized the existing educational programmes with the objectives of the regional programme of social and educational support for children with special needs, as well as with the latest achievements of international and national science and technology, provided the educational process with all necessary tools and implemented computer technologies for the systematic development of the system of training children with special needs for life in society and their professional identity. They, together with these children and their parents, developed individual programmes for each child's development aimed at shaping key life competencies. Experimental laboratories, vocational

workshops and mini workshops were created, during which these children had the opportunity to receive primary professional adaptation.

In the system of career guidance for children with special needs, they focused on forming conscious self-determination, understanding the meaningful aspects of their future profession or work, expanding their understanding of ways to master a particular profession. Forms of cooperation between enterprises, organizations, educational institutions and parents, based on the principles of respect and partnership, have been improved. The work of counselling centres for parents raising children with special needs has also been organized.

The main department of education and science and the rectoral council of universities of the region joined efforts to provide graduates of special boarding schools with unhindered access to higher education. The attention of society, the public, the media and every citizen was also drawn to the need to change attitudes towards children with special needs to ensure the process of their full integration into society. The psychology of the society and the public of the region concerning children with special needs is gradually changing to a positive one.

Some targeted **activities of the programme** include:

1. The strengthening of **facilities and resources** in regional boarding schools; the creation of proper conditions for the allowance and education of children.

2. Another important component of the programme “Childhood” is scientific justification, joint efforts of scientists, practitioners, doctors, psychologists, representatives of the deputy corps, authorities, exchange of experience within the region and involvement of leading specialists in solving the problem of children with developmental problems.

3. The organization of regional **mass children’s events** to create conditions for diverse development of children with special needs. These events are systematic and allow these children to discover and realize their creative and physical potential. Competitions of artistic creativity and sports competitions for children with psychophysical problems are held annually; such events as “Believe in Yourself”, “We Can Do Everything”, “Go for It, Kid”, “Follow Your Talents” are organized for orphans and children deprived of parental care. Four years in a row, small paralympic games are held in the region, which are jointly organized with sponsors, enterprises and celebrities of the region. It has already become a tradition to hold annual meetings of graduates of general education institutions and vocational schools, mostly orphans and children deprived of parental care, with representatives of higher education institutions of the region. In general, an

average of 60% of orphans, children with special needs and those of other privileged categories participate in the mass events of the childhood programme annually.

The databases of children who live in difficult conditions, as well as those raised in disadvantaged families, were created; a network of orphanages for minors was expanded; labour and recreation camps for children and adolescents registered in juvenile services were established; a network of out-of-school institutions, children's and youth clubs at the place of residence was expanded; during holidays, employment opportunities were offered to minors prone to negative manifestations; at quick-response and information centres of police, a database of children who left their families and educational institutions without permission was compiled; mail and phone trust lines were created; in each city and district, counselling services were provided; national and international programmes on promoting healthy lifestyles were implemented in regional schools of the region, including "Youth for the Future", "Equal to Equal", "Dialogue", etc.; comprehensive preventive raids such as "Street Children", "Railway Station", "School Holidays", "Summer" were systematically organized, etc.

In every educational institution, there are prevention councils, which include representatives of interested state bodies, enterprises, the public and parents. The main aim of personal record-keeping is to collect and systematize data on the state of physical, mental health and development of orphans and children with special needs, their educational conditions, etc.

To ensure proper conditions for the allowance and education of different categories of children with special needs, a single innovative educational and recreational space was created. It involves creating a comfortable environment for the education of these children. A system of medical, psychological and pedagogical diagnostics of children was developed to identify special needs and create an individual comprehensive programme of their rehabilitation. A strategy for psychological and pedagogical support of children with special needs was developed and implemented. Innovative research was conducted; recreational, pedagogical and managerial innovations were modelled, projected and gradually tested. Partnership relationships with various groups of the public (foundations, associations, sponsors, etc.) were deepened and improved at the new quality level. However, there is a need for a more detailed study of each child taking into account the complexity of working with children with special needs and relying on the position of deepening anthropocentric approach in the processes of education and development.

Results

Analyzing the results obtained from the analysis of the developmental levels of children with special needs in the EG and the CG, one can conclude that consistent, purposeful and long-term rehabilitation work within the regional programme of social and educational support gives better results than similar work under traditional conditions. Thus, determining the development gap of children with special needs in the CG, it becomes clear that these children much fall behind the children in the EG (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Comparative analysis of developmental levels of children with special needs based on the results of the regional programme of social and educational support*

The focus of life competency development	Age of children with special needs											
	3		6		9		12		15		18	
	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG
Perception and fine motor skills	2.1/ 0.9	1.6/ 1.4	4.9/ 1.1	4.0/ 2.0	7.7/ 2.3	6.6/ 3.4	10.5/ 1.5	8.8/ 3.2	12.3/ 2.7	10.5/ 4.5	16.1/ 1.9	14.0/ 4.0
Cognitive development	2.2/ 0.8	1.8/ 1.2	5.0/ 1.0	4.3/ 1.7	7.9/ 2.1	6.9/ 3.1	10.8/ 1.2	9.0/ 3.0	12.5/ 2.5	10.8/ 4.2	16.3/ 1.7	14.6/ 3.4
Thinking development	2.1/ 0.9	1.8/ 1.2	4.8/ 1.2	3.8/ 2.2	7.5/ 1.5	6.3/ 2.7	10.3/ 1.7	8.7/ 3.3	12.1/ 2.9	10.3/ 4.7	15.8/ 2.2	13.5/ 4.5
Social and emotional development	2.2/ 0.8	1.5/ 1.4	4.3/ 1.7	3.0/ 3.0	7.4/ 2.6	4.2/ 4.8	10.5/ 4.5	6.0/ 6.0	13.6/ 1.4	6.8/ 7.2	16.0/ 2.0	8.0/ 10.0
Self-care development	2.2/ 0.8	1.5/ 1.5	4.3/ 1.7	3.0/ 3.0	7.6/ 1.4	5.6/ 3.4	10.2/ 1.8	8.0/ 4.0	14.0/ 1.0	11.5/ 3.5	16.5/ 1.5	14.0/ 4.0
Gross motor activity	2.2/ 0.8	1.8/ 1.2	4.4/ 1.6	2.3/ 3.7	7.2/ 1.8	5.0/ 4.0	9.3/ 2.7	6.9/ 5.1	10.7/ 4.3	8.3/ 6.7	12.8/ 5.2	10.0/ 8.0

**the level of development gap is indicated after*

To verify the hypothesis about the significance of differences in the average of development gap in the EG and the CG, the authors of the article used the Student's t-test. Table 2 shows the initial data and the results of the calculations.

Table 2. *Initial data and results of the Student's t-test concerning verification of the hypothesis about the significance of differences in the average of development gap in the EG and the CG*

Statistical indicator		Value
Average of development gap in the EG	$X1$	1.87
Average of development gap in the CG	$X2$	3.72
EG respondents	$n1$	2485
CG respondents	$n2$	2470
Standard deviation of the indicator in the EG	$s1$	0.81
Standard deviation of the indicator in the CG	$s2$	0.94
Empirical value of Student's t-test	t	-74.226
Critical value of Student's test ($df = n1 + n2 - 2$, $p < 0,05$)	critical	1.96

The results of the calculations prove the statistical significance of the average difference since the empirical value of Student's test $|t| = 74,226$ significantly exceeds its critical value 1.96.

The development level of life competency in children with special needs can be determined based on the analysis of the total of indicators of all areas in its development. The experimenters have developed the following six development levels of life competency in children with special needs: zero level, initial level, unsatisfactory level, satisfactory level, good level, excellent level. They were determined taking into account the age of children with special needs (3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 years old) in the EG and the CG (see Table 3). It is found that the development levels of life competency in children with special needs have increased more in the EG than in the CG. Thus, the indicators of excellent level in EG children have increased as follows: 3 years old – by 2.2% of the total; 6 years old – by 5.6%; 9 years old – by 4,8%; 12 years old – by 6.0%; 15 years old – by 10.6%; 18 years old – by 10,8%. However, the CG indicators were significantly lower – by 1.8%, 2.7%, 3.7%, 4,5%, 5.0%, and 5.5% respectively. That is almost twice as low.

Table 3. *Comparing development levels of life competency in the EG and CG based on Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2)*

Age	Empirical value of Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2)	Critical value of Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2) ($v = 5$, $p \leq 0,001$)	Differences
3	13.353	20.52	Insignificant
6	149.296	20.52	Significant
9	119.902	20.52	Significant

12	148.129	20.52	Significant
15	495.757	20.52	Significant
18	565.540	20.52	Significant

One can observe similar correlations at other levels, too. Thus, the indicators of the initial level have decreased and are as follows: 3 years old – by 37.7% in the EG and by 38.9% in the CG (hereinafter respectively); 6 years old – by 27.7% and 31.2%; 9 years old – by 19.1% and 24.9%; 12 years old – by 11.2% and 16.9%; 15 years old – by 7.7% and 13.8%; 18 years old – by 6.4% and 13.1%.

The experimenters used Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2) to statistically justify the findings that, after the experiment, the distribution of children in the EG and the CG by levels of life competency differed significantly.

The calculations support the hypothesis that the experiment has resulted in significant changes in the EG. At the age of three, the differences between the CG and the EG are insignificant.

Discussion

Scientific and theoretical views of O. Gazman (2000) and his supporters cannot be regarded as indisputable. It is difficult to agree with the scholar's ideas about the processes of socialization and individualization and their essential differences. He uses outdated approaches to the concept of socialization as a process of adaptation to "proper conditions". Meanwhile, the modern scientific literature normally interprets socialization as a two-way process, which necessarily involves the initiative of the individual, as well as his/her self-regulation and self-awareness. The authors of the article believe that such a sharp division, which was made by the author, is mostly explained by the worldview crisis experienced by society, and, finally, the pedagogical consciousness in the late 1980s – the early 1990s.

Nevertheless, the authors of the article fully agree with and accept as a theoretical benchmark the idea of the pedagogy of freedom as an educator's and child's activity about the support and development of a certain individual, special and peculiar nature embodied in or acquired by the individual. They proceed from the assumption that the pedagogy of freedom, as a basis for pedagogical support, ensures the following: firstly, individual assistance to children in meeting their primary basic needs; secondly, the creation of conditions for the realization of natural physical, intellectual, emotional abilities and capabilities specific to that individual;

thirdly, the support of the individual in autonomous spiritual self-building, as well as in the development of the capacity for self-determination.

The idea of pedagogical support does not contradict the anthropocentric approach to education that existed or exist. According to L. Mishchuk (1997), it develops them in two contexts. First, it specifies and defines certain tasks of personality-oriented pedagogical work, as well as prescribes the logic and technology of its implementation. Secondly, it has its own psychological foundations (the idea of awareness of freedom and volition; the idea of self-determination as the nucleus of personal development; the idea of maintaining the actual and potential; the idea of individualization and socialization as a holistic context of human development), which, on the one hand, reinforce its role in the system of personality-oriented education and, on the other hand, distinguish it as a special pedagogical activity that ensures the process of self-development of the child with the maximum use of his/her personal potential.

As rightly noted by N. Mikhaylova (2001), the educator most often works not with the problem of the child, but with the fact of his/her life. In order to turn a fact from the life of a child into a problem that needs a solution, it is necessary that the child, with the help of the educator, first realize this fact and, secondly, address it to himself/herself and, thirdly, analyze the fact in terms of “want”, “can”, “must”. Thus, the educator helps the child turn the fact of difficulty into a problem and the problem into a creative task.

In the process of experimental work, the following humanistic foundations of the regional system of social and educational support for children with special needs were confirmed. Indeed, solving the problems of children with special needs is a matter for all people and structures of a powerful industrial region, and favourable social and psychological conditions are created for these children at the place of residence or in special educational institutions. Early rehabilitation and social adaptation of the development of life competency make the regional system of social and educational support accessible to every family with children with special needs resides, enables such children to receive an individual programme of social and educational support for the processes of rehabilitation and social adaptation. Thus, both development and implementation of the regional programme of social and educational support for children with special needs in the industrial region confirm Aristotle's view, “Good always depends on the fulfilment of two conditions: the first one is to correctly determine the task and the ultimate goal; the second one is to find a variety of tools that lead to this goal”. The effectiveness of social and pedagogical support for

children with special needs depends on the correct determination of the guidelines and strategies of the regional programme, as well as on the joint efforts of all those involved.

This conducted study does not disclose all aspects of the problem under study. Further research should be related to social and pedagogical support of children obtaining vocational education or working, as well as the interaction between educational institutions and additional educational institutions in the process of providing social and educational support. The scientific elaboration of these problems will help to further improve social and educational work with children with special needs, preparing them for creative self-realization.

The scientific and theoretical value of the obtained results is as follows: it is demonstrated for the first time that modern processes of rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with special needs are becoming interdisciplinary and can be the subject not only of special pedagogy but also of social and pedagogical research; the essential characteristics of social and pedagogical support as a special kind of social-pedagogical activity, which lie in identifying, determining and solving problems of the child to exercise his or her rights to full development and are based on individual assistance and cooperation in their self-determination, have been justified and represented; the model of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs in industrial regions has been developed, theoretically justified and experimentally verified; a regional comprehensive programme of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs in industrial regions has been developed, and the mechanisms for its implementation have been determined; scientific and theoretical principles of management of the regional system of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs based on a programme-oriented approach have been identified; the provisions on the personal and professional development of social educators and social workers have been improved (they include such components as regulation, stabilization and transformation as integrative characteristics of professional activity and professionalism of the individual when interacting with children with special needs); the views on the features and socio-pedagogical opportunities of industrial regions for such socio-demographic groups as children with special needs, as well as theoretical and methodological principles of professional retraining for social educators and social workers in the context of working with children with special needs have been further developed.

The practical value of the obtained results lies in the fact that the following programmes, technologies and content characteristics have been

developed: a regional targeted complex programme of support for children with special needs; technologies for practical implementation of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs in industrial regions; regional and city (district) targeted complex programmes of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs; the programme of activities of the regional system of personal record-keeping and coordination councils on the issues of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs; the model and content of targeted retraining of specialists providing social and pedagogical support to children with special needs. According to the obtained results, such specialized courses as “Pedagogical Deontology”, “Theoretical and Methodological Principles of Social and Pedagogical Support for Children with Special Needs”, taught at Slavonic State Pedagogical University and within the framework of advanced training courses at Luhansk Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education, have been developed.

Conclusions

The analysis of the literature devoted to the problem under study proves that Ukrainian social pedagogy makes only the first steps in the scientific justification of the content, forms and methods of social and pedagogical support for children with special needs. Its research is characterized by descriptiveness and practical recommendations based on the fund of scientific knowledge of related sciences. In the context of the research objectives, however, one should pay particular attention to the author's personal contribution, namely, the developed conceptual approaches to social and pedagogical support for children with special needs, as well as the stages of social and pedagogical support and their essential characteristic as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, conditioned by two interrelated pedagogical paradigms: the humanistic paradigm of education, whose essence lies in building human relationships based on equivalenceness, respect and trust in the child; the social and pedagogical paradigm of education, whose main idea is to harmonize the pupil's interaction with the social environment.

The structure and content of the regional system of social and educational support for children with special needs have confirmed their ability to ensure the effectiveness of rehabilitation and social adaptation of children with psychophysical problems and develop life competency in them. Many years of experience in the experimental organization of social and educational support for the rehabilitation and social adaptation of

children with special needs makes it possible to conclude that timely and early social and educational support is a priority area in the development of life competence in children with psychophysical problems since it benefits from the capacities of the industrial region, creates a favourable rehabilitation environment and takes into account the most productive age for the rehabilitation and social adaptation.

Summarizing all of the above, one can conclude about the innovation of the regional programme of social and educational support for children with special needs. Firstly, this programme helps to humanize the attitude of the child with special needs and his/her problems through the use of various options of comprehensive social and educational support. Secondly, the regional programme is a scientific algorithm that ensures the logical sequence and phasing of action of all performers of social and educational support for children with special needs. Thirdly, the developed programme allows one to implement the state-public system of management of social and educational support of children with psychophysical problems. Finally, the regional programme provides effective assistance to every family based on a complete database of legal, social, economic, medical, psychological and pedagogical support of the interests and requests of the child and his/her further self-determination in public life.

These are general characteristics of the regional programme based on the ideas of educational support for children with special needs. By all means, this programme should be understood in the context of a certain schematism and simplicity, which are inevitable in the generalized scientific description of complex scientific ideas oriented towards practical application.

The obtained results prove the hypothesis about the fact that social and educational support of children with special needs can be successful if appropriate models, regional programmes and mechanism for their implementation based on anthropocentric approach are developed. The analysis of the results obtained through the developed system of criteria shows a fairly stable dynamics of individual indicators and the overall level of development of children involved in experimental and educational work.

Thus, the successful implementation of social and educational support of children with special needs at theoretical, conceptual and practical levels has confirmed the general research hypothesis, its strategic and tactical ways of achieving high scientific results.

The main points and conclusions of the research can be used to organize practical daily work on social and pedagogical support for children with special needs at the level of the region, city, district, various educational

institutions and families. Besides, they can act as a theoretical basis for further development of practical recommendations for those who work with children with special needs in industrial regions, including workers from regions of other types. The results of the research can contribute to the training of various specialists, in particular in the system of postgraduate education. The research materials can be useful in the development of the content of national and regional policies concerning children with special needs, adults with special needs and further modernization of rehabilitation and pedagogical work with pupils.

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