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*Familiarizing preschool children with the «Child in society»  
educational profile in modern realities*

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**ОЗНАЙОМЛЕННЯ ДОШКІЛЬНИКІВ  
ЗІ ЗМІСТОВОЮ ЛІНІЄЮ «ДИТИНА В СОЦІУМ»  
В СУЧАСНИХ РЕАЛІЯХ**

*У сучасних реаліях актуалізується проблема ознайомлення дошкільників із соціальним довкіллям, яке є надзвичайно складним та різноманітним. Ана-*

ліз Базового компонента дошкільної освіти уможливив констатацію, що завданням закладів дошкільної освіти є навчити дітей диференціювати людей за ступенем спорідненості, за віком, статтю, національністю, соціальним статусом. Однак при цьому випущений важливий аспект ознайомлення дітей дошкільного віку із соціумом: ознайомлення їх з тими людьми, які мають певні особливості розвитку, що є надзвичайно важливо в умовах інклюзивного освітнього простору.

У статті вказано, що необхідною і важливою умовою розвитку кожного суспільства є забезпечення права і можливості усім громадянам, у тому числі й тим, які мають особливі потреби, на освіту. У демократичних країнах це право реалізується шляхом пропозиції таким особам різних форм здобуття освіти. Надзвичайно актуальна і продуктивна серед них є інклюзія. У статті проаналізовано основні ознаки та нормативну базу інклюзивної освіти.

Акцентовано на принципах, які мають лежати в основі роботи з дошкільниками та слугувати орієнтиром для вихователя у відборі змісту ознайомлення їх з особливостями та проблемами осіб з обмеженими можливостями здоров'я. До них, зокрема, належать: повага до притаманних людині чеснот, її особистої самостійності, зокрема свободи робити власний вибір, і незалежності; недискримінація; повага до особливостей осіб з інвалідністю і прийняття їх як компонента людської різноманітності й частини людства; рівність можливостей тощо.

Визначено завдання роботи закладу дошкільної освіти в напрямі ознайомлення із соціальним довкіллям в умовах творення інклюзивного освітнього простору. Ця робота має бути системною та здійснюватися в кількох напрямках. Наприклад, доцільно ознайомити дошкільників з особливостями сприймання навколишнього світу особами, які мають певні функціональні обмеження, розвинути в дітей морально-етичні якості (співчуття, співпереживання, милосердя, взаємодопомогу тощо), сформувані уявлення про здоров'я як цінність людського життя, а також виховати почуття відповідальності за здоров'я – своє та інших людей. Така робота має проводитися цілеспрямовано, спиратися на емоційний досвід дитини, інтегруватися у заняття з різних розділів програми навчання, виховання і розвитку дітей дошкільного віку, реалізовуватися у межах різних форм роботи із застосуванням наочності.

**Ключові слова:** дошкільник; Базовий компонент дошкільної освіти; змістова лінія «Дитина в соціумі»; виховання; інклюзія; здоров'я.

## FAMILIARIZING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH THE «CHILD IN SOCIETY» EDUCATIONAL PROFILE IN MODERN REALITIES

*In today's reality, the problem of familiarizing preschoolers with social environment, which is extremely complex and diverse, is actualized. Analysis of the basic component of preschool education allows us to make a conclusion that the tasks of preschool establishments are to teach children to differentiate people by degree of affinity, by age, gender, nationality and social status. However, an important aspect of familiarizing preschoolers with society is overlooked: familiari-*

zing children with those who have certain peculiarities of development, which is extremely important in the context of an inclusive educational space.

Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to uncover the ways of familiarizing preschoolers with the «Child in Society» content line in modern conditions.

The article states that the necessary and important condition for the development of each society is the provision of the right to education for all citizens, including those with special needs. In democratic countries, this right is realized through the provision of different forms of education to such people. Extremely relevant and productive among these forms is inclination. The research analyzes the main features and normative basis of inclusive education.

The emphasis is on the principles that should be the basis for working with preschoolers, and which should serve as a guide for the educator in selecting the content of preschoolers' acquaintance with the specifics and problems of people with disabilities. These, in particular, include: respect for the inherent dignity of a person, their personal autonomy, in particular the freedom to make their own choice; non-discrimination; respect for the particularities of people with disabilities and their acceptance as a component of human diversity and of humanity; equality of opportunity, etc.

The tasks of a preschool educational institution in the direction of familiarization with social environment in the conditions of creation of inclusive educational space are determined. Such work must be systemic and implemented in several directions. For example, it is advisable to introduce preschoolers to the peculiarities of perceiving the environment by people with certain functional limitations in order to develop moral and ethical qualities (compassion, empathy, charity, mutual assistance, etc.), to form a notion of health as a value of human life, as well as to educate a sense of responsibility for health, both their own and of other people. Such work should be done purposefully, relying on emotional experience of the child. It should be integrated into classes from different sections of the program of training, upbringing and development of preschoolers, and implemented in various forms of work with the use of visibility.

**Key words:** preschool children; basic component of preschool education; «Child in society» content line; education; inclusion; health.

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## Introduction

The modern world is extremely rich and varied. It contains a huge number of objects a preschool child must get acquainted with. Obviously, the diversity of this world, complex links between its objects put forward serious requirements for the teacher. Thus, he should not only be well aware of the techniques of familiarizing preschoolers with the social environment, but also possess the necessary methodology.

The basic component of preschool education, which determines national requirements for the level of education, development and upbringing of a child at the age of 6–7 years, provides a number of educational profiles which a preschooler must master. Our purpose is to analyze the content of the «Child in Society» educational profile. The authors of the document argue that this educational profile is to be aimed at «the formation of socially recognized behavioral skills in children, an ability to navigate the world of human relationships, willingness to empathize and sympathize. While communicating with adults as bearers of the social and historical experience of mankind, the child develops an ability to understand others, engage in peer-to-peer and adult activities, cooperate with others in order to achieve a common result, evaluate its own abilities, respect desires and interests of other people. Interaction with other people is a child's entry into the human society and requires an ability to coordinate interests, desires, actions with other members of society» (Bohush et al., 2012). Further a detailed description of the content of the educational profile is proposed. That is to say, a preschool child should be able to differentiate people by degree of affinity, age, gender, nationality and social status. However, in our opinion, it overlooks an important aspect of familiarizing preschool children with society – getting children to know those who have certain developmental peculiarities is extremely important in the context of the inclusive educational space.

#### **Analysis of recent research and publications**

Familiarizing preschool children with the social environment, in general, and people around them, in particular, has been the subject of research by many scholars. Thus, A. Bohush and N. Havrysh draw attention to the fact that «the specificity of modern social and economic existence, extremely fast pace, acuteness and depth of social contradictions call on us and even more so on teachers to exercise a long-lost ability to hear and understand others» (Bohush & Havrysh, 2008, p. 300). The authors reveal the principles of interaction between children and adults in the modern educational space and describe the relationship with peers as a factor of forming ideas about the social and objective world.

T. Pirozhenko et al. (2016) state that a preschool child's cornerstone competence is «an ability to interact, cooperate, understand, realize its aspirations in society among peers, younger and older people». The authors believe that developing this competence implies «... meaningful and profound enrichment of the concepts associated with the category of HUMAN which constitute the I-image and the image of another person» (Pirozhenko et al., p. 5). It is worth highlighting that in their methodological guidelines the authors address the issues of coexistence with other people, tolerance as a social habit, ways of overcoming anxiety in children of preschool age. However, the focus is laid on internally displaced children as a result of hostilities in Donbas.

Pryshchepa (2009, p. 6) relates the formation of social competence to such skills as navigation in the world of people, understanding other people's needs and behavior, respect and support of others. Therefore, «a child's openness to the human world is a personal need». An individual must acquire the skills of social behavior,

form a conscious attitude to himself as a free and independent unit as well as to his duties, as determined by ties with other people, nurture willingness to perceive social information, acquire an ability to sympathize, rejoice, empathize with others.

The question of getting preschool children acquainted with the complex, diverse and largely obscure human world is researched by a psychologist O. Kononko. The scholar argues that an important part of teaching activities is to guide the child in the world of people, systematize and deepen its perception of familiar ideas, to equip the child with new information, to «utilize» this information in real life and help the child «experience» it, to adjust presentation of such information to the child's perceptual level (Kononko, 1998, p. 205). The author emphasizes that children need to be taught to differentiate people by external and internal attractiveness, age, gender, degree of affinity. «The child of senior preschool age is able to discriminate between many specific features of a person, in particular, appearance-related (height, weight, facial expressions, color of hair and eyes, facial expressions, gestures), age and sexual characteristics, the nature of kinship, individual manifestations of the inner condition and mental qualities, the nature of activity, main social roles» (Kononko, 1998, p. 211). The scholar addresses the problems of socializing children with special needs, however, she does not dwell on its interaction with healthy children.

Therefore, the topicality of the problem of familiarizing preschool children with physically challenged children and their needs, its insufficient elaboration in the theory and methodology of education determined the choice of the research topic.

The **aim** of the article is to reveal the ways of familiarizing preschool children with the «Child in Society» educational profile with respect to the inclusive educational space.

### **Main contents**

An important precondition for the development of every society is providing all citizens, including those with special needs, with the rights and opportunities to obtain education. In democratic countries this right is realized through the provision of different forms of education. One of the most effective of them is inclusion (see, for example: Farelli, 2000; Florian, 2008; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), which implies involvement of physically challenged persons in the educational process of mass education institutions where they may study along with healthy peers. Such inclusion is beneficial for all participants of the educational process (Khanzeruk, 2016) as it sets a «standard» for children with special needs to reach up to while healthy children are encouraged to develop and demonstrate such qualities as compassion, empathy, desire to help the weaker etc.

### **Inclusion: the main features and regulatory framework**

Scholars (Semago, 2010) distinguish the following principles of inclusion:

- every child has the right to grow, develop, and study in the environment of healthy peers;
- individual peculiarities of a child's development are viewed not as its disadvantages or negatives but as barriers to the mastery of a certain competence or knowledge;

- a child with special needs and its environment must adjust to each other to «meet halfway»;
- there are no children incapable of studying but there are methods, techniques and content of education inadequate to a certain child's needs;
- any child, healthy or physically challenged, develops more fully in the integrative environment;
- the right to choose an educational trajectory (inclusive or special education) belongs to parents.

In practice, however, inclusion can only be effective if a number of conditions are met. For instance, A. Kolupaieva distinguishes the following:

- effective public policy aimed at the integration of all members of society;
- implementation of early intervention and corrective-developmental measures;
- social support for families with children with special needs and comprehensive assistance to them;
- provision of institutional education to persons with peculiarities of psychological and physical development;
- development of the regulatory framework of inclusive education of people with special educational needs;
- creation and expansion of the system of general and vocational training of people with developmental disabilities (Kolupaieva, 2009, pp. 226–227).

It should be noted that one more crucial condition for effective implementation of inclusion is the readiness of all participants of the educational process to follow it: healthy children must accept and understand those who are different and, in return, physically challenged children must do their best to integrate into a team of children who may not always be happy to accept them.

This circumstance explains the necessity to look more closely into the issues of familiarizing preschool children (which should be done as early as possible) with the problems of persons with disabilities and, if needed, find ways of solving any arising conflicts.

The Supreme Council of Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in December 2009. In accordance with this document Member States shall take all possible measures to promote the education of the whole society in matters regarding persons with disabilities, reinforce respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices regarding these persons, particularly those based on the ground of gender or age, promote the potential and contribution of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life («Konventsiiia pro prava», 2016). With no doubt, preschool education must also be involved in the implementation of these principles. Children must be prepared to function within inclusive education and fully adopt the values of equality of all citizens and personal dignity which underlie a new philosophy of social cohabitation.

Nowadays the world community has adopted a number of documents regulating the ethical aspects of communication with people with special needs. In 1982 the

United Nations General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Important theses of this document are as follows:

- disability is not a physical defect but an inability to perform certain activities due to a defect as well as the social conditions in which a person lives;
- persons with disabilities are a very heterogeneous group that consists of people with various diseases and pathologies which create different social barriers for them;
- creation of an accessible environment for the persons with disabilities is a responsibility not only of the state but of the society as well;
- an important task of the state is to familiarize its citizens with the benefits which individuals and the society can obtain as a result of the involvement of persons with special needs into various spheres of public life;
- one of the priorities is social assistance to persons with disabilities which implies their admission in general rather than specialized institutions;
- the principle of equal rights for persons with special needs and healthy persons means that the needs of all individuals are equally important; these needs should serve as the basis for social planning and all measures should be to ensure equal participation opportunities for everyone;
- persons with disabilities exercise equal rights and equal responsibilities; accordingly, people with disabilities should be fully integrated into public life;
- the focus should be laid on the ability rather than inability of persons with special needs («Vsemirnaia programma deistvii», 1982).

The ethical principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are as follows:

- respect for human dignity, personal autonomy, in particular, the freedom to make own choice and independence;
- non-discrimination;
- full and effective involvement and inclusion in society;
- respect for the peculiarities of persons with disabilities and their acceptance as a component of human diversity and part of humanity;
- equality of opportunities;
- availability;
- equality of men and women;
- respect for the capabilities of children with disabilities in developing countries and respect for their right to individuality («Konventsiiia pro prava», 2016).

These principles should be the basis for work with children with special needs and serve as a guide for teachers in selecting techniques of familiarizing preschoolers with peculiarities and problems of people with disabilities.

Thus, the function of preschool institutions in the outlined context is to familiarize preschool children with the problems of people with special needs, develop moral qualities of pupils (compassion, empathy), treat health as a value of human life, raise a sense of pupils' own responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing.

### **Ways of familiarizing preschoolers with the problems of persons with special needs:**

Ways of achieving the stated aim in preschool institutions can be varied.

First of all, teachers must introduce children to peculiarities of people with certain physical limitations without directly addressing this problem. Thus, it is advised to acquaint children with the structure of the human body, ask the child to perform a number of tasks: close the eyes and draw a house, put on headphones and listen to what friends are saying, stand on one leg and collect toys scattered on the floor. Obviously, to perform such tasks is not easy. In this way children can realize that every person is rich because of the ability to see, hear, move.

In fact, one can draw children's attention to the fact that some people are deprived of this wealth and that by working their way through difficulties, overcoming external resistance they move forward sometimes achieving outstanding results. It is worth telling children about well-known composers, artists, performers, athletes and ordinary people who work hard in their daily lives to bring fame to their Motherland.

Children can take interest in life stories of Ludwig van Beethoven, a famous composer, Andrea Bocelli, an opera singer, Franklin Roosevelt, the 32-nd President of the United States, Nicholas James Vujicic, an Australian motivational speaker, Dasha Bezkostna, an artist, Olena Akopian and Maksym Veraksa, well-known athletes. They succeeded in life and gained popularity. Each of them yet has or had serious health problems, which, however, did not become a hindrance to development and self-realization.

This information is necessary for children in order to form the right image of people with special needs. The latter often depends on the public's perception based on various factors posing a barrier for involvement and equality («Vsemirnaia programma deistvii», 1982). Our society is only learning to tolerate people with special needs. Commonly used special education of persons with disabilities made it impossible for them to communicate with healthy children and thus nurtured the perception of them as severely disabled and unable to function properly. Our task is to overcome this stereotype and move from the prevalent medical model of disability to the social model. It is not worth focusing on physical or mental defects of such persons that distinguish them from healthy people because this way individuals with certain limitations are given labels of physical or mental inferiority. It is advisable to focus on the causes of a person's disability, imperfect social conditions and inadequate legal framework in order to find ways of facilitating these persons' functioning, encouraging personal development and allowing them to live life to the fullest based on preserved functions.

It is also important to explain to preschoolers the elementary rules of behavior when dealing with physically challenged children. The general rules include the following:

- kind-hearted attitude to all people including those with certain functional limitations;



- addressing a conversation directly to a person with disabilities even if the person is accompanied;
- taking up a comfortable position with relation to a person with special needs (sitting on the same level with the companion);
- the need to monitor the environment to predict the difficulties faced by a physically challenged person;
- assistance to a person with special needs only after he has agreed to it, etc.

Children can learn these rules while playing didactic games or modeling situations. The teacher could offer pupils posters with pictures of physically disadvantaged people in different life situations and invite them to analyze these situations and indicate what kind of assistance could be provided to the depicted people.

Getting to know the problems of people with special needs should not result in mere awareness in this sphere but in the formation of such character traits as kindness, mercy, compassion, empathy, willingness to come to the rescue etc. However, this is impossible if one focuses on the rational component of education only. One should not underestimate the role of emotions and feelings in education. The impact of education is only productive when it causes a child to feel. Children develop a sense of empathy or the ability to understand another person through empathy at preschool age. Thus, teaching activities pertaining to familiarizing preschoolers with the problems of people with certain disabilities should be aimed at developing empathy. It is important to teach the child to recognize feelings and emotions of others and provide an example of true compassion. One could offer children to switch roles with imaginary people, particularly those with certain physical peculiarities. It would allow them to better understand the problems and needs of such people as well as to become ready to provide these people with the necessary and appropriate assistance. You may simply ask the child: «How would you feel when ...?» or use real stories from physically challenged people's lives, «What do the characters of the story feel?», «Why do they have such feelings?» and so on.

There is an example of a didactic game. It might help children better understand emotions and feelings of others and design different behavior patterns when dealing with peers with disabilities. Children are asked to look at a picture depicting a playground where children are having fun. Some of them are playing with a ball, some are playing tag and other games. There is a sad boy sitting alone in a wheelchair depicted in a corner of the picture. The picture is used to start a conversation as children are asked to interpret what is depicted in it. It is important to pay attention to children's emotions, to help them realize why the sick boy is sad and, most importantly, come up with possible ways of how to cheer him up.

Teaching children to share is equally important. It is not just about sharing material things; emotions and good wishes can also be shared. It is crucial that children feel joy and pride in their sharing. The following didactic game could help children succeed in this – every preschool child in the group is encouraged to formulate good wishes for children with disabilities. These may be the wishes of health, happiness, joy, good luck etc. Helped by the teacher, children can make a poster with

children's palms filled with the wishes and hang it in a visible location in the group room. So, every child will remember and realize that «other» people live beside it and they deserve good wishes and help.

Promoting health as a value is a rather difficult task taken on by preschool institutions. It is obvious that due to insufficient life experience and good health children don't reflect on the importance of physical wellbeing. It is necessary, however, that the family and preschool institution join their efforts in this direction. Preschoolers become strongly aware of the value of health in the process of physical and valeological education which implies active involvement in different types of motor activities, hardening the body, instilling hygienic skills, etc. So, the parents' example and common recreational activities of all family members are of great importance.

Another major task of preschool institutions is the formation in preschoolers of an ability to predict the consequences of their actions including potential risks and to make independent decisions in difficult situations (Karpenko, 2015). It will help them form responsibility for their own and other people's health.

To this end one could use didactic pictures and model dangerous situations which would invite children to predict possible consequences as well as ways of avoiding risks. These can be pictures portraying children playing close to a busy road; children running on thin ice or jumping from ice floe to ice floe; boys having a pretend sword fight with sharpened sticks; a child standing on a ninth-floor window sill; children playing with matches, etc.

The discussion algorithm could be like this (let's take the example of playing by the roadside): What do you see in the picture? What can this cause? Where can you play? What is the right way to cross the street?

### **Conclusions**

In the context of the development of the inclusive educational space it is extremely important to introduce preschool-aged children to the problems of people with special needs. These activities must be consistent and implemented in several directions. Specifically, it is advisable to familiarize preschool children with how persons with certain functional disabilities perceive the outer world, develop moral and ethical qualities of children (compassion, empathy, mercy, mutual assistance, etc.), form the understanding of health as a value of human life as well as instill a sense of responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing. Such activities should be performed purposefully and take into account children's emotional experience, be incorporated into various classes and implemented in a comprehensible manner through different activity forms.

### **Prospects of further research**

The problem of adapting the child with special educational needs to the environment of a general preschool institution as well as promoting teachers' readiness to work in the inclusive educational space remains relevant and requires further research.

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